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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 9 APRIL 2026 | THURSDAY | BENGALURU | 20 SHAWWAL 1447 H | Vol 5 | Issue No 88 | Pages: 9

QUOTE of THE DAY

Fans should not forget that they are the ones who will suffer, not their idols, if they hurt themselves in the pursuit of their stars. Youth must be very careful. If they get hurt, the hardship is theirs alone. They must prioritise their safety

—RAJINIKANTH,
on extreme risks Vijay's fans are taking to get close to him during rallies.

US, IRAN AGREE TO 2-WEEK CEASEFIRE

The truce was brokered by Pak but is fragile as both US and Iran make different claims

TEHRAN/WASHINGTON, 8 APRIL

Iran, the United States and Israel have agreed to a two-week ceasefire in their ongoing war, but fresh strikes across the region within hours of the announcement have cast doubt over the truce's durability.

The deal was brokered by Pakistan and brings a sigh of relief to the world grappling with energy crisis amid closure of Strait of Hormuz.

This comes after US President Donald Trump threatened to wipe out Iran's "whole civilisation... in one night".

US Vice President JD Vance described the deal as "fragile", while an Israeli military official said operations against Iran were continuing despite earlier indications of a pause.

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has confirmed Tehran's participation in Pakistan-facilitated peace talks with the US in Islamabad. Sharif said he held a "warm and substantive" telephone conversation with Pezeshkian shortly after the ceasefire announcement, which includes provisions for reopening the Strait of Hormuz to shipping.

However, key terms remain unclear, with all sides offering differing interpretations.

There is also uncertainty over whether the ceasefire extends to Lebanon, where Israel is engaged in conflict with Hezbollah. While mediators including Pakistan suggested a broader pause, Israel has not confirmed any halt in operations there.

US President Donald Trump; Pak PM Shehbaz Sharif; Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei —PTI/WIKI/INSTAGRAM

TRUMP'S 50% TARIFF THREAT TO IRAN ALLIES

Trump said he had agreed to "suspend the bombing and attack of Iran for a period of two weeks" if Tehran agrees to reopen Hormuz.

Iran has suggested it may formalise its control over the Strait of Hormuz by charging transit fees on ships. A regional official indicated that both Iran and Oman could levy such charges, though this has not been formally confirmed. Trump said US warships would remain in the region, signalling a potential flashpoint along the vital route that carries about 20 per cent of global oil and gas trade.

The fate of Iran's nuclear and missile programmes, central to US and Israeli objectives, remains unresolved. Trump said Washington would work with Tehran to "dig up and remove" enriched uranium buried after earlier strikes, but Iran has not confirmed this.

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth warned that Washington could strike again if Iran does not hand over the enriched uranium, saying it could "do something like" previous joint US-Israeli strikes on nuclear sites. "We reserve that opportunity," he said.

Adding to tensions, Trump announced a 50 per cent tariff on goods from any country supplying weapons to Iran, with immediate effect and no exemptions. Iran's demands for ending the war include the withdrawal of US forces from the region, lifting of sanctions and release of frozen assets, conditions seen as difficult for Western nations to accept. Trump said discussions on tariffs and sanctions relief were ongoing.

Meanwhile, the White House said plans for in-person talks remain uncertain, noting that "nothing is final" until officially announced. Iran's National Security Council warned it could target Tel Aviv if Israeli military actions continue elsewhere, raising fears of escalation. —*PTI*

>>>More on Pages 7 & 8

INDIA ASKS ITS NATIONALS TO 'EXPEDITIOUSLY EXIT' IRAN

DUBAI, 8 APRIL

India on Wednesday advised its nationals in Iran to "expeditiously exit" the country using routes suggested by its mission in Tehran in light of the recent developments.

"In continuation of the advisory of 7 April 2026, and in light of recent developments, Indian nationals still in Iran are strongly advised to expeditiously exit Iran, in coordination with the Embassy and using the routes suggested by the Embassy," the Indian mission advisory said in a post on X.

The embassy also provided emergency contact numbers (+989128109115; +989128109102; +989128109109, and +989932179359) and email (cons.tehran@mea.gov.in) for those in need.

According to official data, around 9,000 Indians, including students, were in Iran when the conflict began on 28 February. Nearly 1,800 Indians have returned to India so far.

Meanwhile, India on Wednesday welcomed a two-week ceasefire between the US and Iran and called for "de-escalation, dialogue and diplomacy" to ensure lasting peace in West Asia.

New Delhi also expected unimpeded freedom of navigation and global flow of commerce through the Strait of Hormuz, the strategically key waterway between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman that handles roughly 20 per cent of global oil and LNG. —*PTI*

Jaishankar dismissed Pak as a dalal. But now the self-styled Vishwaguru stands exposed, his self-declared 56-inch chest shrunk and shrivelled, Why is the PM of India -- who claims very special friendship with US, Israel, Iran, and the Gulf and who also holds the BRICS+ Presidency -- not in the picture at all during the ceasefire negotiations? What happened to 'papa ne war rukwa di'?
—Congress

India withdraws bid to host COP33 in 2028: Report

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

The government has withdrawn its offer to host the COP33 climate summit in 2028, Climate Home News reported on Wednesday. An Indian official informed the summit on 2 April, saying the offer made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in December 2023 was being withdrawn "following a review of its commitments for the year 2028". No additional explanation has been provided. The Indian government has not publicly announced the decision. The decision leaves uncertainty over the host country of COP33.—*AGENCIES*

7 men gangrape schoolgirl in Bareilly

BAREILLY, 8 APRIL

A 16-year-old girl was allegedly raped by seven people in a cafe here in the Bhojipura area, police said on Wednesday.

On 2 April, the girl was on her way to school when she was forced by one of the accused to ride on his bike to the cafe, where other people were already present.

Deputy Superintendent of Police (North) Mukesh Chandra Mishra said the student was allegedly threatened with the circulation of a video of an earlier sexual assault.

According to an FIR lodged at Bhojipura Police Station, the accused were identified as Asad Haider alias Karan, Chand, restaurant owner Saifi, Samir Ahmad, Banti, and two unnamed persons.

Mishra said that on 19 March, Asad had taken the girl to a room above the 'Saifi Cafe' and sexually assaulted her, filming the act in the process.

He allegedly threatened to circulate the clip on the social media if she told anyone. A hunt is on for the accused who remain at large. —*PTI*

RBI holds rates, awaits clarity on war's impact on economy

MUMBAI, 8 APRIL

RBI kept its key policy rate unchanged on Wednesday, adopting a cautious wait-and-watch stance as policymakers assessed the fallout from the six-week Iran conflict on energy supplies, inflation and growth.

RBI's six-member Monetary Policy Committee voted unanimously to keep the benchmark repurchase rate at 5.25 per cent, flagging heightened uncertainty after the West Asia conflict drove crude prices sharply higher, weakened the rupee and disrupted trade flows. RBI's policy stance was retained at neutral.

Stating that geopolitical uncertainties had risen since the last policy meeting, RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said the rate-setting panel chose to "wait and watch."

While inflation remains within the target band for now, risks have risen due to volatile oil markets and the possibility of "second-round effects," which could weigh on demand.

The RBI trimmed its growth outlook and warned that the full impact of the conflict – particularly energy costs – will become clearer only in coming months, reinforcing the case for holding rates steady.

The RBI also, for the first time, offered a forecast for core inflation, which it sees at 4.4 per cent in the current financial year.

The RBI estimates compare with more than 7 per cent GDP growth projected in government estimates released in Februaryt. The RBI had reduced interest rates by a cumulative 125 basis points since February 2025, including a quarter-point cut in December. — *PTI*

>>>More on Page 8

Keralam, Assam, Puducherry to vote today

T'PURAM /GUWAHATI/ PUDUCHERRY, 8 APRIL

Voting will be held on Thursday across Keralam, Assam and Puducherry in crucial Assembly elections marked by intense contests, high-pitched campaigning and last-minute controversies.

In Keralam, 2.71 crore voters will decide the fate of 883 candidates across 140 seats. The CPI(M)-led LDF is seeking a rare third consecutive term under Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, banking on its governance record, while the Congress-led UDF eyes a comeback citing anti-incumbency and corruption allegations. The BJP-led NDA is attempting to open its account.

Adding to the charged atmosphere, the Congress alleged BJP candidate Sobha Surendran was "caught red-handed" distributing cash in Palakkad, a charge she denied as "fabricated". The Election Commission warned against violations during the silence period, even as allegations of liquor distribution surfaced.

In Assam, 2.50 crore voters will cast ballots across 126 constituencies, with 722 candidates in the fray.

Preparations underway on the eve of voting in the Kerala Assembly elections in Thiruvananthapuram —PTI

The BJP-led NDA is aiming for a third straight term, while the Congress-led opposition seeks to regain power. Key leaders, including Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Congress's Gaurav Gogoi, are contesting.

Security has been tightened with central forces and web-casting at polling stations.

In Puducherry, 9.5 lakh voters will decide the fate of 294 candidates across 30 seats. The NDA is striving to retain power against the Congress-DMK alliance, with actor Vijay's party emerging as a third force.

Authorities across all regions have completed arrangements, with provisions for elderly and differently-abled voters, ensuring a smooth electoral process. —*PTI*

>>>More on Pgs 3, 4, 5 and 6

K'taka polls: BJP seeks gains, Cong aims to retain

BENGALURU, 8 APRIL

Voting for bypolls to two Assembly segments in Karnataka—Bagalkot and Davanagere South—will be held on Thursday, following a high-voltage campaign by both the ruling Congress and the opposition BJP. Although the outcome of these by-elections is unlikely to have an immediate impact on state politics, the contest is seen as a matter of prestige for both the Congress and the BJP. While the Congress faces the challenge of retaining both seats, the BJP is aiming to wrest them and deliver a setback to the ruling party, which is currently witnessing an "internal power struggle" over leadership. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 2

Monkey fever claims one in Shivamogga

SHIVAMOGGA, 8 APRIL

With summer near, cases of monkey fever—scientifically named Kyasanur Forest Disease (KFD)—have resurfaced in Shivamogga, claiming one life in Sagar taluk.

The deceased has been identified as 65-year-old Manjappa, a resident of Manmane village in Siddapur taluk of Uttara Kannada district. The incident triggered concern by residents in the region.

Manjappa had reportedly been suffering from high fever for several days. He was initially admitted to the sub-divisional hospital in Sagar. Blood tests later confirmed KFD infection

According to health officials, KFD is prevalent in forested areas after the monsoon and into the onset of the next rainy season. Districts of Shivamogga, Chikkamagaluru, Kodagu and Uttara Kannada are particularly vulnerable to the disease.

Meanwhile, the cases of fever in and around Sagar has seen a steady rise, with hospitals witnessing an increasing influx of patients. Local residents have urged the Health Department to take immediate and stringent measures to contain the spread of the disease and ensure timely treatment for those affected.

There is also a growing demand for more awareness campaigns at the village level to prevent further outbreaks. —*Salar News*

TMC ACCUSED OF SHOUTING

EC-TMC meet ends bitterly as CEC asks leaders to 'get lost'

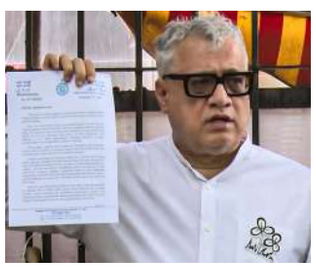
NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

A Trinamool Congress delegation's meeting with the Election Commission on Wednesday ended on an acrimonious note, with TMC leaders saying the Chief Election Commissioner told them to "get lost" and accused them of "shouting."

A TMC delegation comprising its Rajya Sabha leader Derek O'Brien, deputy leader Sagarika Ghose, MPs Saket Gokhale and Menaka Guruswamy met the ECI's full bench as WB goes to polls amid charges of disenfranchisements after SIR, and allegations of the ECI's "understanding" with the BJP.

O'Brien said they handed over nine letters written by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to CEC Gyanesh Kumar, which the MP said have not been acknowledged. They also apprised the ECI of poll officials' links with the BJP, and demanded that they be transferred."We gave him six examples of officials having links with the BJP," O'Brien said.

"We asked the CEC how he can ensure free elections when such tainted officers are being appointed in Bengal. To this, his answer was 'get lost," said O'Brien. "We told the CEC we will not listen to him as he does not allow his colleagues to speak. We have attended many meetings like this, where only the CEC speaks," O'Brien said. When the meeting, ended a TMC leader congratulated Gyanesh on becoming the first CEC to have notices seeking his removal submitted in Parliament, O'Brien said. — *PTI*



Derek O'Brien said they handed over nine letters written by WB CM Mamata Banerjee to CEC Gyanesh Kumar —PTI

This time, the Elections in West Bengal would surely be fear-free, violence-free, intimidation-free, inducement-free and without any chappa, booth jamming and source jamming
-EC on X

>>>More on Page 6

High lead levels found in soil near battery units

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

—FREEPIK

A new study has found high levels of lead contamination in soil near battery recycling units across Delhi-NCR, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh, raising concerns about public health and environmental safety.

The analysis, 'Soiled with Lead: from Battery Recycling,' was carried out by Toxics Link, an environmental research and advocacy organisation, and published on Wednesday.

The authors examined 23 soil samples collected near lead-acid battery recycling units in selected cities, including locations close to residential areas, local communities, and primary schools.

"All samples showed evidence of widespread lead contamination ranging from 100 parts per million (ppm) to 43,800 ppm," said the analysis.

With reference to the Environment Protection Rules, 2025, the findings indicated that 52 per cent of the collected soil samples contained lead concentrations exceeding the 5,000 ppm benchmark for a Hazardous Contaminated Site.

Also, 31 per cent of the samples surpassed the permissible limits for industrial areas.

"Unexpectedly, higher lead levels were detected in samples collected from authorised recycling units compared to those collected from the unauthorised units," said the study.

"The spent batteries are sent to recycling units or smelting facilities, both authorised as well as unauthorised set-ups, to recover lead, plastic components, etc. These recovered materials are often reintroduced into battery manufacturing," says the study. —*PTI*

Woman electrocuted at Shivamogga resort

SHIVAMOGGA, 8 APRIL

A women died after being electrocuted at a private resort near Gajanur in Shivamogga on Tuesday, with family members alleging negligence on the part of the resort management. Nagamma, 45, was reportedly accompanying a catering team to the resort. While attempting to dry her wet clothes on a barbed wire fence within the resort premises, a short circuit caused the fence to become live, leading to the fatal electrocution. Nagamma was rushed to a hospital but succumbed to her injuries. A case has been registered at Tunganagar Police Station against the resort owner under charges of negligence. Her family are demanding compensation, stating that the victim was the sole breadwinner of her family. ***—SALAR NEWS***

—ANI

Man burnt alive in car fire in Uttara Kannada

YALLAPUR, 8 APRIL

A man was burnt alive after the car he was driving caught fire on National Highway 63 at Arbail Ghat in Yallapur taluk of Uttara Kannada district early on Wednesday morning, police said. The driver, who was alone in the car, died on the spot. His identity is unknown due to the severity of the burns. District Superintendent of Police MN Deepan said the victim was driving from Hubballi in Dharwad district towards Ankola. As the vehicle neared the Talikumbri bus stop in Ankola taluk, it suddenly caught fire. Yallapur inspector Ramesh Hanapur said a short circuit or engine fault may have caused the fire. A case has been registered. ***—SALAR NEWS***

Bharath Hospital conducts free cancer surgeries

MYSURU, 8 APRIL

Bharath Hospital and Institute of Oncology (BHIO), in collaboration with Automotive Axles Ltd, successfully performed free breast cancer surgeries on 47 patients under the 'Nari Swasthi' project. The initiative was launched to fund surgeries for poor women with breast cancer. YS Madhavi, BHIO's chief radiation oncologist emphasised the importance of early cancer diagnosis. Vijaykumar M, senior consultant surgical oncologist and robotic surgeon who performed the surgeries, highlighted its social impact. Expressing the company's commitment to community welfare, Nagaraja Gargeshwari, President and Director of Automotive Axles Ltd, said, "We are proud to contribute our resources to create a meaningful impact." Beneficiaries also expressed heartfelt gratitude. A patient said she now feels hopeful about the future. ***—SALAR NEWS***

AZHARUDDIN IN TOWN

Ex-cricketer and Telangana Minister Mohammad Azharuddin visits Karnataka State Bioenergy Development Board, holds talks with Chairman SE Sudheendra on joint Telangana–Karnataka initiatives to boost the bioenergy sector ***—SALAR NEWS***

K'taka groundwater usage dips, recharge capacity rises: Report

BENGALURU, 8 APRIL

Karnataka has recorded a significant decline in groundwater usage alongside a notable increase in annual recharge capacity, reflecting the impact of sustained water conservation efforts and good rainfall, Minister NS Boseraju said on Wednesday.

Releasing the 2025 Groundwater Assessment Report at Vikas Soudha, he said the gains are the result of good rainfall, focused policy interventions, and large-scale water conservation initiatives implemented over the past two years.

According to the report, overall groundwater extraction has reduced from 68.44 per cent in 2024 to 66.49 per cent in 2025, indicating more responsible and sustainable usage patterns across the state.

Annual groundwater recharge capacity has increased from 18.74 billion cubic metres (BCM) in 2024 to 19.28 BCM in 2025, while annual extractable groundwater resources rose from 16.88 BCM to 17.41 BCM, the minister's office said in a statement.

Recharge through water conservation structures (WCS) increased by 29.11 per cent, from 0.81 BCM to 1.04 BCM within a year.

The number of water conservation works has risen sharply from 3.15 lakh in 2024 to 3.94 lakh in 2025, strengthening the state's groundwater recharge ecosystem.

The report indicates improvement in groundwater status across 11 taluks, with several regions moving to safer categories.

Domestic groundwater extraction has also declined by 0.58 per cent in 2025. Officials attributed this to increased reliance on surface water under the Jal Jeevan Mission.

Boseraju said that initiatives such as lake rejuvenation, year-round water supply through treated and surface water, sustained public awareness campaigns, and good rainfall have played a key role in enhancing water recharge.

The government will also roll out the Digital Water Stack initiative to initiate space technology and AI-based satellite surveillance to obtain real-time data for groundwater monitoring. *—PTI*

Cong eyes another term, BJP seeks gains in bypolls

2.59 L voters to vote in Bagalkot, 2.31L in Davanagere

BENGALURU, 8 APRIL

Voting for bypolls to two Assembly segments in Karnataka—Bagalkot and Davanagere South—will be held on Thursday, following a high-voltage campaign by both the ruling Congress and the opposition BJP.

The polls were necessitated by the deaths HY Meti and Shamanur Shivashankarappa, both Congress MLAs from Bagalkot and Davanagere South respectvely.

Counting of votes will take place on 4 May.

Although the outcome of these by-elections is unlikely to have an immediate impact on State politics, the contest is seen as a matter of prestige for both the Congress and BJP.

While the Congress faces the challenge of retaining both seats, the BJP is aiming to wrest them and deliver a setback to the ruling party.

Over 2.59 lakh eligible voters are expected to cast their votes at around 319 polling stations in Bagalkot, where nine candidates are in the fray.

Clockwise from top: Cong candidates Umesh Meti, Samarth Mallikarju; BJP's Veerabhadrayya Charantimatha and Srinivas T Dasakariyappa

In Davanagere South, over 2.31 lakh eligible voters are expected to vote across 284 polling stations, with 25 candidates contesting.

The BJP has fielded former MLA and 2023 defeated candidate Veerabhadrayya Charantimath from Bagalkot, and a fresh face, Srinivas T Dasakariyappa, from Davanagere South.

Congress candidate Umesh Meti is the son of HY Meti, while Samarth Mallikarjun is the grandson of Shamanur Shivashankarappa.

Samarth's father, SS Mallikarjun, is a State Minister, while his mother, Prabha Mallikarjun is an MP.

In Davanagere South, with 14 of the 25 Congress candidates in the fray belonging to the Muslim community, there are apprehensions about a split in votes, which could benefit the BJP.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has accused the Election Commission of "double standards" and "bias" after it sought details on the state's guarantee schemes in Davanagere and Bagalkot districts. *—PTI*

FUEL WOES

Autorickshaws queue for auto LPG gas at a bunk on St. Mark's Road in Bengaluru on Wednesday ***—MOHAMMED ASAD***

Govt ask people not to heed to auto LPG shortage rumours

BENGALURU, 8 APRIL

Karnataka government on Wednesday urged auto drivers, owners, and the public not to pay attention to any rumours regarding the shortage of auto LPG in the state.

It stated that some private auto LPG supply companies are experiencing a shortage at present. However, to remedy this the state-owned oil companies are supplying higher quantities of LPG to such companies.

This shortage has hit hard the autorickshaw drivers, many of who had to halt their services for few days due to unavailability of auto LPG.

"It has been noticed that some media outlets have published false reports that auto owners and drivers are standing in queues in front of auto gas stations in the State, based on rumours that there is a shortage of auto LPG," the Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Disputes Department said in a statement.

The state government had earlier said that there was adequate supply of auto LPG with LPG stations run by state-owned oil companies.

To compensate, the public sector gas companies -- IOC, BPCL and HPCL -- have enhanced the supplies to retail outlets, the Department said. Earlier, these three companies supplied 56.67 metric tonnes of LPG gas per day, and currently this has increased to 3.58 metric tonnes per day.

"Therefore, it has been advised that auto owners and drivers in the State should not panic by listening to any rumours and cooperate with us," it added.

Karnataka Minister for Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs KH Muniyappa on Monday said he would convene a meeting on 10 April, aimed at resolving the auto LPG supply issue in the state. *—PTI*

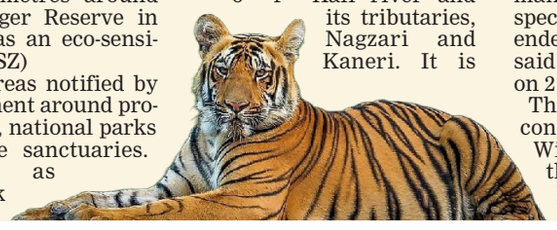
Centre declares eco-sensitive zones around Kali Tiger Reserve

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

The Union environment ministry has issued a draft notification declaring 663.32 square kilometres around the Kali Tiger Reserve in Karnataka as an eco-sensitive zone (ESZ)

ESZ are areas notified by the government around protected areas, national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. They act as "shock absorbers" by minimising human impact around such ecologically fragile areas.

"The Kali Tiger Reserve holds the major catchment of Kali river and its tributaries, Nagzari and Kaneri. It is home to tigers, leopards, wild dogs, elephants, Indian gaurs, Indian pangolins, great Indian hornbills, castlerock night frogs and many other charismatic species of endangered and endemic flora and fauna," said the notification issued on 2 April.



The Kali Tiger Reserve consists of the Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary and the adjoining Anshi National Park. *—PTI*

Man-animal conflict: Govt urges sterilisation of specific species

BENGALURU, 8 APRIL

Karnataka Minister **Eshwar Khandre** on Wednesday said that rising human-wildlife conflict has created a need to consider sterilising specific species, and that the issue should be publicly debated.

He said no list has been prepared and discussions will be held with officials and stakeholders.

Noting that a related issue is pending before the Supreme Court, the Minister said there are plans to submit a proposal after due deliberation.

Khandre said the government is seriously considering the voluntary relocation of forest dwellers who wish to move out of the forest. He has asked officials to prepare a list of those willing to relocate.

- The government is seriously considering the voluntary relocation of forest dwellers. Khandre has asked officials to prepare a list of those willing to relocate.

Expressing grief over the death of a coffee grower in Kodagu district due to a wild elephant attack on Wednesday, the Minister said the government and the department are making every effort to prevent human-elephant conflict.

"The government had planned to build a sanctuary to address the problem of elephants. The Centre's permission is needed," he said. *—PTI*

Priyank backs Cong Chief's BJP, RSS are 'snake' remark

BENGALURU, 8 APRIL

Karnataka Minister Priyank Kharge on Wednesday defended his father and AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge's "poisonous snake" remark against the BJP and RSS.

He also hit out at Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, calling him "frustrated" and accusing him of "caste privilege" over his remarks on Mallikarjun Kharge.

Kharge said, "Who is sowing the seeds of communal poison in our society? Why? Should we save and nurture such ideologies and principles? No. That is what he (Mallikarjun Kharge) has said.

Kharge said the RSS ideology and principles were detrimental to the country's and society's progress as their perspective does not accommodate the Constitution.

At an election rally in Assam's Sribhumi district, citing the Quran, Mallikarjun Kharge had said that if a poisonous snake passes in front of someone offering namaz, the person should stop the prayer and kill the snake.

Calling Sarma "frustrated" over his remarks against the AICC chief, Priyank said Mallikarjun Kharge has been in politics for about 50 years, and that neither the BJP nor the Prime Minister has answers to the questions he raises in Parliament and outside. Sarma believes he can speak against those from other communities, he said. *—PTI*

MAN DIES DURING RATHOTSAVA IN KALABURAGI

KALABURAGI, 8 APRIL

A devotee died after accidentally slipping and coming under a chariot wheel during a Rathotsava in Hagaragundagi village in Kalaburagi district.

The deceased was identified as Vinod Reddy, 40. The incident occurred during the Shri Sharanabasaveshwara Rathotsava in Hagaragundagi village on 7 March.

Thousands of devotees from nearby areas had gathered in the village to participate in the religious event. On Tuesday evening, while devotees were collectively pulling the chariot, Reddy reportedly lost his balance and got trapped under the wheel

Farhatabad police rushed to the spot and shifted the body to a hospital. A case was registered and further probe is underway. *—Salar News*

NEAR MANIKYADHAR FALLS

Kerala teen goes missing in Chikkamagaluru

CHIKKAMAGALURU, 8 APRIL

A minor girl from Kerala has gone missing during a trekking trip in the Chandradrona hill ranges of Chikkamagaluru district on the evening of 7 April, police said.

The girl Srinanda, 16, is a resident of Palakkad district in Kerala.

Additional superintendent of police, Jayakumar said the grade 10 student was a part of a group of around 40 tourists, who had travelled from Kerala to the State. She had gone missing at the Manikyadhara water falls in Chikkamagamuru taluk.

"The incident occurred around 6.30pm while the group was exploring scenic spots in the Chandradrona hills. The girl went missing under unclear circumstances, triggering concern among her family members and the trekking team," Jayakumar said.

Srinada, the 16-year-old girl who has gone missing while on a trek in the Chandradrona hill ranges on 7 April ***— MT.KINETICS/INSTAGRAM***

A massive search operation is underway to trace the girl.

Over 30 police personnel and officials from the State Forest Department and fire services had launched late-night search.

"However, the operation yielded no clues until midnight due to dense fog, difficult terrain and poor visibility, forcing the team to temporarily suspend the search," Jayakumar added.

The search resumed on Wednesday morning with renewed efforts. Forest officials have deployed drones to locate the whereabouts of the teenager.Teams have been formed to comb through possible routes she may have taken from the point where she was last seen.

Local villagers and trekkers have also joined in to assist the authorities.

In Kodagu district, a trekker, from Kerala had gone missing recently.She was traced after a joint search operation was launched.. *—Salar News*

Asia Jewels Show 2026 returns to Bengaluru with luxury showcase

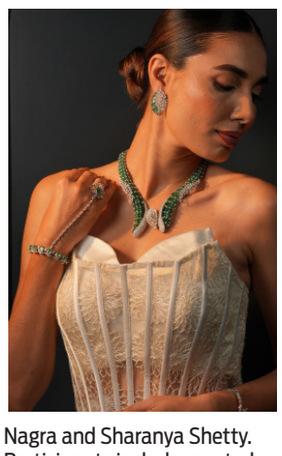
The much-awaited Asia Jewels Show 2026 will be held from 10 to 12 April at JW Marriott Hotel Bengaluru, bringing together leading jewellery designers and brands from across India under one roof.

Now in its 62nd edition, the exhibition will feature an extensive range of fine jewellery, including gold, diamond, platinum, traditional, antique and bridal collections, along with kundan, jadau, polki and lab-grown diamond pieces.

The event is positioned as a one-stop destination for shoppers ahead of the upcoming Akshaya Tritiya and the wedding season.

Organised by HRS Media, the show will run daily from 10.30 am to 8pm and is expected to attract jewellery enthusiasts, designers and buyers from across the region.

The grand inauguration will be attended by actresses Pragya Nagra and Sharanya Shetty. Participants include reputed jewellers from different cities across the country such as Bengaluru, Mumbai, Delhi, Jaipur, Hyderabad and Surat, showcasing exclusive and high-end collections. Organisers say the event will present several never-seen-before designs, making it one of South India's most prominent jewellery exhibitions. ***—ADVERTORIAL***



LDF, UDF hopeful in KERALAM, BJP sure of opening account

State will see tight race as the victory margin in the recent civic polls was less than 1 pc

SEATS IN FOCUS

MANJESHWAR

Manjeshwar, in Kasaragod district, is witnessing a three-cornered contest between the UDF's IUML, the BJP and the CPI(M). Sitting MLA AKM Ashraf (IUML) is in the fray for the UDF, while the BJP has fielded K Surendran and the LDF KR Jayananda. The race is close, with victory margins in the last 2 elections being just 89 and 745. Manjeshwar is one of the 2 seats where the BJP is fighting IUML. Of the 2.27 lakh voters, around 1.3 lakh are Muslims, 90,000 Hindus and 7,000 Christians. However, in 2021, Muslim turnout was low at 65%, compared to 80% among Hindus.

AKM ASHRAF

Age:	48
Party:	IUML
Edu:	BA
Criminal cases:	Nil
Assets:	Rs 47 lakh

K SURENDRAN

Age:	56
Party:	BJP
Edu:	BA
Criminal cases:	242
Assets:	Rs 40.50 lakh

NEMOM

Nemom, near the capital city of Thiruvananthapuram, is witnessing a three-way contest between the UDF's KS Sabarinadhan (Congress), LDF's V Sivankutty of the CPI (M) and the BJP's Rajeev Chandrasekhar, the party's Kerala unit president. The main fight is between the BJP and the CPI(M). With Hindus comprising 60% of the voters, BJP has an edge, while the 22% Muslims may back Sivankutty as the Congress has no chance of winning here. Christian votes will be split between the Congress and the CPI(M). Sivankutty is the sitting MLA of Nemom and is also a minister.

RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR

Age:	62
Party:	BJP
Edu:	BTech, MS
Criminal cases:	2
Assets:	Rs 93.88 crore

V SIVANKUTTY

Age:	71
Party:	CPI(M)
Edu:	BA, LLB
Criminal cases:	7
Assets:	Rs 46 lakh

POONJAR

Poonjar in Kottayam was once considered the pocket borough of veteran PC George. George, now with the BJP, is in a direct fight with the LDF and the UDF. In 2021, he lost to UDF's Kerala Congress (M) by 16,817 votes. LDF has fielded sitting MLA Sebastian Kulathunkal, while the UDF has nominated MJ Sebastian. The seat has a mixed Christian, Muslim and Ezhava (OBC) population. George is attempting to consolidate Christian and Hindu votes, while the LDF is relying on its traditional Ezhava and SC base. Congress is banking on Christians and Muslims as usual.

PC GEORGE

Age:	74
Party:	BJP
Edu:	BSc
Criminal cases:	4
Assets:	Rs 1.5 crore

SEBASTIAN KULATHUNKAL

Age:	59
Party:	Kerala Congress (M)
Edu:	LLB
Criminal cases:	1
Assets:	Rs 48 lakh

PALAKKAD

The battle in Palakkad is a three-cornered one between the BJP, the Congress and an LDF-backed Independent. The BJP has fielded its firebrand Sobha Surendran, while the Congress has nominated actor Ramesh Pisharody. The CPI(M) is backing NMR Razack, a prominent businessman, instead of fielding its own candidate, hoping to attract non-traditional votes. Palakkad is one of the few seats where the BJP consistently finishes second and holds a big vote share. With control of Palakkad Municipality, the BJP is aiming to secure its 2nd-ever Assembly seat in Kerala.

SOBHA SURENDRAN

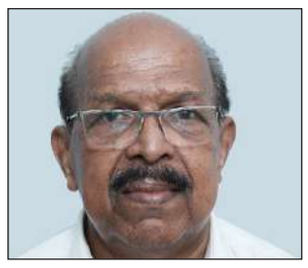
Age:	52
Party:	BJP
Edu:	BA (Hindi)
Criminal cases:	35
Assets:	Rs 1.94 crore

RAMESH PISHARODY

Age:	42
Party:	Congress
Edu:	Pre-Degree
Criminal cases:	NIL
Assets:	Rs 3.12 crore

AMBALAPUZHA

Ambalapuzha is witnessing a high-stakes contest with former CPI(M) leader G Sudhakaran contesting as an Independent with Cong's support. CPI(M) has fielded H Salam, while the BJP has nominated Arun Anirudhan. Sudhakaran has turned Chief Minister Vijayan's remark calling his exit 'chettatharam' (a mean act) to his advantage, by projecting himself as a "greater Leftist" than Salam. Sudhakaran also keeps reminding the public that he hails from a poor family which used to live in a 'chettakudil' (thatched hut). CPI(M) is going all out to defeat him and avenge his exit.

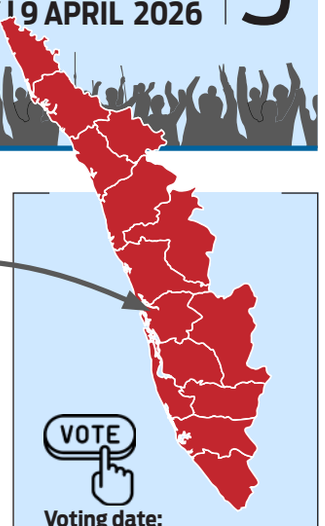


G SUDHAKARAN

Age:	78
Party:	Independent (Congress backed)
Edu:	MA, LLB
Criminal cases:	1
Assets:	Rs 56 lakh

HYDER SALAM

Age:	53
Party:	CPI(M)
Edu:	BA
Criminal cases:	6
Assets:	Rs 85 lakh



Voting date:
9 April

Counting date:
4 May

KERALAM

Total seats: **140**

Majority mark: **71 seats**

Total candidates: **890**

Total voters: **2.71 cr**

ALLIANCES AND PARTIES

- **LDF:** CPI(M), CPI, Kerala Congress (Mani)
- **UDF:** Congress, IUML, Kerala Congress (Joseph), Kerala Congress (Jacob)
- **NDA:** BJP, Bharat Dharma Jana Sena

2021 RESULTS

CPI(M)	62
INC:	21
CPI:	17
IUML:	15
Ind:	6
JD(S):	2
BJP:	0

VOTE READY

Officials leave for their booths on the eve of Kerala Assembly elections, in Kozhikode, on Wednesday. —PTI

FAMILY FIRST, PLEASE
A LOOK AT THE DOMINANCE OF DYNASTIC POLITICS ACROSS PARTY LINES

JOSE K MANI

Son of KM Mani, founder of Kerala Congress (M)
Party: Kerala Congress (M)
Seat: Pala

Pala is witnessing a three-cornered contest between the UDF, the LDF and the BJP. UDF has fielded Mani C Kappen (Kerala Democratic Party), LDF has nominated Jose K Mani (Kerala Congress-M), and the BJP has fielded Shone George. With Christians making up 45% of the electorate, the BJP is hoping to split it through Shone, while the UDF is trying to retain it. LDF is banking on splitting Christians and consolidating its SC and OBC base.

CHANDY OOMMEN

Son of Oommen Chandy, ex-CM
Party: Congress
Seat: Puthupally

Chandy Oommen entered electoral politics after his father Oommen Chandy's death in July 2023 and won the Puthuppally bypoll with a record margin of 37,719 votes. He is contesting again from Puthuppally. His main rival is the CPI(M)'s KM Radhakrishnan, while the BJP has fielded Raveendranath Vakathanam. Facing a sizable Christian population, CPI(M) is banking on its OBC and ST base and a split in Christian votes.

PK SHYAMALA

Wife of MV Govindan, CPI(M)'s Kerala Secretary
Party: CPI(M)
Seat: Taliparamb

PK Shyamala, the wife of MV Govindan, is contesting from Taliparamb after he chose not to seek re-election from here. The party's decision to field her as his successor has triggered internal dissent. Senior leader TK Govindan, a party veteran of over 60 years, resigned in protest over nepotism and is now contesting as a UDF-backed Independent. Chief Minister Vijayan defended Shyamala as a seasoned politician with more than 40 years of experience.

KEY PROMISES MADE, BUT WILL THEY BE KEPT?
A LOOK AT WHAT PARTY MANIFESTOS PROMISE

NDA

- Every woman from poor and BPL households will be provided with a Bhakshya Arogya Suraksha Card with a monthly recharge of Rs 2,500, which they can use at pharmacies and grocery stores.
- Welfare pension of Rs 3,000 per month for women heads of poor households, widows and senior citizens.
- 2 free LPG cylinders per year for poor families, one each during Onam & Christmas.
- To ensure transparency, accountability, and greater participation of devotees in the affairs of shrines in Kerala.
- Launch of 'Sabarimala Infrastructure Development Mission' and to probe the gold theft case.

UDF

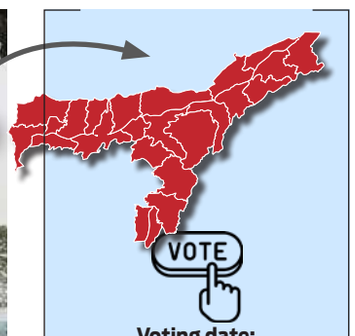
- Free bus travel for women.
- Rs 1,000 monthly assistance for college girls.
- Rs 3,000 social welfare pension.
- Rs 25 lakh free health insurance per family.
- Interest-free loans up to Rs 5 lakh for young entrepreneurs.

LDF

- To make Kerala a completely poverty-free state.
- To raise welfare pensions to Rs 3,000 from Rs 2,000.
- Set up of "Back to Campus" initiative to help job seekers gain practical skills linked to employment opportunities.
- Women's employment is another major focus.
- To increase the participation of women in the workforce to 50%.
- To expand support for the transgender community and ensure gender justice in development initiatives.

BJP eyes 3rd term; Cong keen on reclaiming power in ASSAM

2.50 cr voters, including 6.42 lakh first timers, to decide the fate of 722 candidates



Voting date:
9 April

Counting date:
4 May

ASSAM

Total seats: **126 seats**

Majority mark: **64 seats**

Total candidates: **722**

Total voters: **2.49 cr**

ALLIANCES AND PARTIES

- **NDA:** BJP, AGP, UPPL, BPF, RHJM
- **ASOM SONMILITO MORCHA (ASM):** Cong, RD, AJP, CPI-M, CPI, CPI(ML)(L)
- **Independent parties:** AIUDF, AITCG

2021 RESULTS

BJP	60
Cong	28
AIUDF	16
AGP	9
UPPL	6
BPF	4
CPI-M	1

SEATS IN FOCUS

JALUKBARI

Jalukbari, a mix of urban and rural voters under the Gauhati Lok Sabha seat, has been represented by CM Himanta Biswa Sarma for 5 terms, who will face Cong's Bidisha Neog this time. Himanta won by 1 lakh votes in 2021. This western Guwahati seat is a major economic hub. Controlling this seat gives political influence over a key urban region.

HIMANTA BISWA SARMA

Age:	57
Party:	BJP
Education:	PhD
Criminal cases:	Nil
Assets:	Rs 35 cr

BIDISHA NEOG

Age:	36
Party:	Cong
Education:	Graduate
Criminal cases:	Nil
Assets:	Rs 12.5 L

JORHAT

Jorhat, a key Upper Assam seat in the Brahmaputra Valley, has a largely urban electorate. Cong's Gaurav Gogoi will debut here against BJP's Hitendra Nath Goswami, who has held this seat for 5 terms. Located in Assam's tea belt, voter alliances — Tea Tribes, Ahoms, OBCs and minorities — will decide outcomes, as no group dominates.

GAURAV GOGOI

Age:	43
Party:	Cong
Education:	BTech
Criminal cases:	Nil
Assets:	Rs 7.57 cr

HITENDRA NATH GOSWAMI

Age:	67
Party:	BJP
Education:	LLB
Criminal cases:	Nil
Assets:	Rs 1.33 cr

GOLAGHAT

Golaghat, a tea garden–dominated constituency, is represented by BJP's Ajanta Neog. She is the state's first woman finance minister and longest-serving woman MLA since 2001. A former Congress leader, she joined BJP in 2020 and retained the seat in 2021. With Ahoms, Tea Tribes, and OBCs, it remains a competitive & alliance-driven seat.

AJANTA NEOG

Age:	62
Party:	BJP
Education:	LLM
Criminal cases:	Nil
Assets:	Rs 2.67 cr

BITUPAN SAIKIA

Age:	59
Party:	Cong
Education:	12th pass
Criminal cases:	Nil
Assets:	Rs 1.35 cr

NAZIRA

This oil-rich constituency is a Congress bastion of the Saikia family for over 3 decades. It was represented by former CM Hiteswar Saikia and his wife Hemoprava Saikia, a minister in the Tarun Gogoi government. It is now held by their son and Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly Debabrata Saikia. He is now seeking a fourth term.

DEBABRATA SAIKIA

Age:	61
Party:	Cong
Education:	BA
Criminal cases:	Nil
Assets:	Rs 5.24 cr

MAYUR BORGOHAIN

Age:	44
Party:	BJP
Education:	BA
Criminal cases:	Nil
Assets:	Rs 2.31 cr

SILCHAR

In the Barak Valley, Silchar is an important constituency that has shifted from a Congress stronghold to a BJP bastion, with the party holding the seat since 2016. The constituency has a large Bengali Hindu population, where the BJP has strong influence. Silchar is a major commercial and administrative centre. It is central to Bengali-speaking politics.

DR RAJDEEP ROY

Age:	55
Party:	BJP
Education:	MCh (Orthopaedics)
Criminal cases:	Nil
Assets:	Rs 3.25 cr

ABHIJIT PAUL

Age:	46
Party:	Cong
Education:	Graduate
Criminal cases:	Nil
Assets:	Rs 1.85 cr

FAMILY FIRST, PLEASE
A LOOK AT THE DOMINANCE OF DYNASTIC POLITICS IN THE STATE

RAHUL ROY
Son of Gautam Roy, senior BJP leader, who was 6-time Congress MLA
Party: Congress
Seat: Hailakandi

Hailakandi is an unreserved seat in Assam's Barak Valley. Long considered to be a stronghold of AIUDF, the seat has alternated between Congress and AIUDF, with BJP trying to gain a foothold. BJP is eyeing to consolidate Bengali Hindu voters in the constituency, which has a considerable number of Muslims.

PRANJAL GHATOWAR
Son of Pawan Singh Ghatowar, former minister and veteran Congress leader
Party: Congress
Seat: Chabua-Lahowal

The newly constituted general unreserved Chabua-Lahowal seat in Dibrugarh district is set for a direct battle between BJP and Congress. Following delimitation, the Lahowal and Chabua constituencies were merged into one. Apart from the local Assamese community, the tea tribe community having a major presence here.

TANJIL HUSSAIN
Son of Rakibul Hussain, Lok Sabha Congress MP
Party: Congress
Seat: Samaguri

Samaguri is a general unreserved seat in Nagaon district. Congress has won the seat 10 times, while BJP, AGP, Janata Party and an Independent have held one term each. Boundaries of the constituency were redrawn with the inclusion of several new areas after delimitation. It has a strong presence of Muslim voters, followed by scheduled caste and scheduled tribes.

KEY PROMISES MADE BUT WILL THEY BE KEPT?
A LOOK AT WHAT PARTY MANIFESTOS PROMISE:

NDA

- Recovery of encroached land from illegal immigrants.
- Implementing the Uniform Civil Code.
- Provide 2 lakh government jobs and create more entrepreneurial opportunities through various schemes while increasing the financial benefit to women beneficiaries under the 'Orunodoi' scheme.

- To protect the land, heritage and dignity of the indigenous people of Assam by implementing the Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950, to expedite the process of detection and pushback of illegal immigrants.
- Rs 5 lakh crore investment for infrastructure.
- To give a cow and a buffalo to each tribal family.

CONGRESS

- An unconditional monthly money transfer into every woman's bank account, along with an additional Rs 50,000 assistance to women willing to set up or expand a business.
- To probe large land allocations to corporates by a Special Investigation Team
- ST status for tea tribes and five other communities — Moran, Motok, Chutia, Tai-Ahom, Koch-Rajbongshi.
- To ensure justice in the Zubeen Garg death case within 100 days of coming into power.
- Rs 25 lakh cashless health insurance for all families.

ASSAM'S GEN Z LEADER TAKES ON BJP

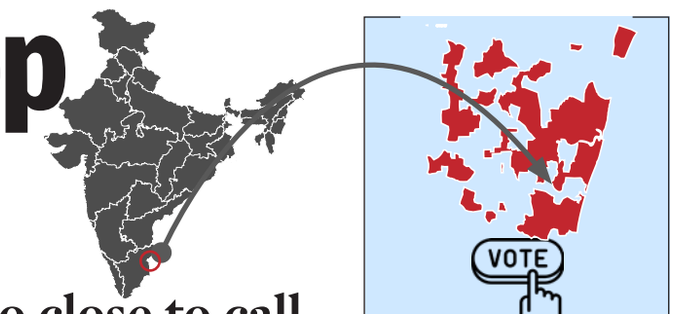
Assam Jatiya Parishad's 27-year-old debutante Kunki Chowdhury, a Gen Z leader is challenging BJP veteran Vijay Kumar Gupta in Guwahati Central, a constituency with 1.93 lakh voters. She has promised to tackle urban floods, youth skill training, parking woes, garbage management and expedite gas pipeline rollout.

Chowdhury has come under fire from CM Himanta Biswa Sarma, who alleged her parents consumed beef.

Himanta said he would take action against Chowdhury's parents for consuming beef and uploaded a picture of it.

A deep fake video also emerged a day after the accusations were made, in which Chowdhury defended her mother consuming beef, prompting her to lodge a police complaint. This led Gorkha people in the constituency to unite against the BJP and asking people to support Chowdhury. A Bengali organisation too offered its support to her.

Will DMK-led allies be able to stop NDA from winning Puducherry?



Close contests, rebel candidates, and shifting loyalties make Puducherry too close to call

Voting date: 9 April

Counting date: 4 May

PUDUCHERRY (UT)

Total seats: 30 seats

Majority mark: 16

Total voters: 7.94 lakh

Total candidates: 294

ALLIANCES AND PARTIES

- **NDA:** AINRC, BJP, AIADMK
- **UPA:** DMK, INC, CPI-M, VCK, CPI

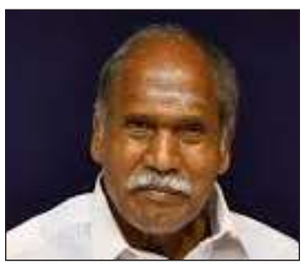
2021 RESULTS

AINRC	10
BJP	6
DMK	6
Cong	2
AIADMK	0

SEATS IN FOCUS

THATTANCHAVADY

Thattanchavady has been a stronghold of CM N Rangaswamy since 1990, and he is now seeking a sixth term. A direct contest with ex-CM and current Lok Sabha MP V Vaithilingam is likely. Before the rise of AINRC, it was dominated by Cong and Janata Party (1974–2001).
The electorate includes farmers, agricultural labourers, and small business owners. Youth voters from here are demanding better education, employment and civic amenities. As a central urban constituency, it is often seen as a bellwether for voter sentiment.



N RANGASAMY

Age:	75
Party:	AINRC
Education:	Bachelor of Commerce, Bachelor in Law
Criminal case:	Nil
Assets:	Rs 27.99 cr

V VAITHILINGAM

Age:	75
Party:	Cong
Education:	BCom
Criminal case:	Nil
Assets:	Rs 10.65 cr

MANGALAM

CM N Rangasamy is contesting from this seat too, where a loss would be a major setback for the ruling NDA.
A fierce triangular contest is seen between Rangasamy, DMK's SS Rangan, known for strong grassroots work, and Cong's K Ragubady. Cracks in the INDIA bloc are evident here, with both DMK and Congress fielding candidates. Historically, Mangalam has been competitive as in 2021, AINRC won it by a margin of 2,751 votes. There are 36,921 voters in here, with a notably high female-to-male ratio (1,117 females per 1,000 males)

N RANGASAMY

Age:	75
Party:	AINRC
Education:	Bachelor of Commerce, Bachelor in Law
Criminal case:	Nil
Assets:	Rs 27.99 cr

K RAGUBADY

Age:	58
Party:	Cong
Education:	Bachelor in Law
Criminal cases:	Nil
Assets:	Rs 5 cr

MANNADIPET

The constituency is represented by Home Minister A Namassivayam of BJP. The main battle is between BJP, AINRC and Cong. Namassivayam switched from AINRC in 2021 over to BJP and won the seat. He also served as a former Congress Minister and PCC president.
The constituency combines agrarian villages with rapidly developing outskirts. Issues like irrigation, employment, infrastructure and land use resonate strongly, making it a microcosm of Puducherry's wider concerns.

A NAMASSIVAYAM

Age:	56
Party:	BJP
Education:	Diploma in Civil Engineering
Criminal case:	Nil
Assets:	Rs 27.78 cr

TPR SELVAME

Age:	54
Party:	Cong
Education:	8th standard pass
Criminal case:	Nil
Assets:	Rs 31 lakh

VILLIANUR

The seat is currently held by Leader of Opposition R Siva of DMK, who is seeking re-election, making the contest a key test of the party's strength against the ruling NDA. The main fight is between the DMK and AINRC, with new entrants TVK and NTK also in the fray. Historically, Villianur has seen high voter turnout and shifting loyalties, often alternating between the Congress and DMK. The seat includes urban, semi-urban and rural pockets.
Issues range from infrastructure and jobs to welfare schemes, making it a key testing ground for party promises.

R SIVA

Age:	59
Party:	DMK
Education:	12th standard pass
Criminal case:	Nil
Assets:	Rs 5.4 cr

B RAVICOUMAR

Age:	48
Party:	AINRC
Education:	BCom
Criminal case:	1
Assets:	Rs 100 cr

YANAM

Yanam is a part of Puducherry but geographically located within Andhra Pradesh. The seat is currently r epresented by Independent MLA Gollapalli Srinivas Ashok, who famously defeated CM N Rangasamy in 2021 by 655 votes. He is now contesting on Congress ticket. The constituency is set for a triangular contest between the AINRC, Congress and TVK.
Electoral outcomes are shaped largely by local identity and the interests of Kapu, fishing and Settibalija communities.

GOLLAPALLI SRINIVAS ASHOK

Age:	33
Party:	Cong
Education:	Graduate Diploma in Management
Criminal case:	Nil
Assets:	Rs 3 cr

MALLADI KRISHNA RAO

Age:	62
Party:	AINRC
Education:	BA
Criminal case:	Nil
Assets:	Rs 10 cr

FAMILY FIRST, PLEASE — A LOOK AT THE DOMINANCE OF DYNASTIC POLITICS ACROSS PARTY LINES

JOSE CHARLES MARTIN
Son of Leema Rose Martin, AIADMK leader; Brother-in-law of Aadhav Arjuna, TVK leader.
Party: Latchiya Jananayaga Katchi (LJK)
Seat: Kamraj Nagar

Jose Charles Martin is contesting as part of NDA alliance. He is the eldest son of Santiago Martin, the "Lottery King" and founder of Future Gaming and Hotel Services, which was the largest donor of electoral bonds, contributing ₹1,368 crore between 2019 and 2024. Previously associated with BJP, Jose launched LJK in December 2025 after a fallout over seat-sharing. In his affidavit, he declared assets worth Rs 597–Rs 609 crore, making him the richest candidate in the Union Territory.

RICHARDS JOHNKUMAR
Son of A Johnkumar, MLA
Party: BJP
Seat: Nellithope

Richards Johnkumar is the son of senior Puducherry MLA. A Johnkumar. In 2021, they became the first father-son duo to be elected to the Assembly at the same time. Both contested on BJP tickets after A Johnkumar left Congress. Richards won Nellithope seat by 496 votes, while his father, a two-time MLA, secured Kamaraj Nagar.

A man cycles past a polling booth near Mission Street in Puducherry, an area known for its distinctive French architecture —PTI

POLLS IN FRENCH TOWN

BYPOLLS TO TEST PARTIES' STRENGTH IN STATES

APART FROM THE ASSEMBLY POLLS, PARTIES WILL ALSO BE TESTED IN NAGALAND AND TRIPURA. HERE, BJP WILL SEEK TO ASSERT ITS DOMINANCE, WHILE CONG WILL AIM TO REVERSE LOSSES. HOWEVER, REGIONAL PARTIES COULD OUTMANOEUVRE BOTH NATIONAL PLAYERS AND EMERGE VICTORIOUS IN THE TWO SEATS

A polling official checks EVMs, VVPATs and other election materials on the eve of bypolls in Tripura —PTI

Koridang (Nagaland)

The bypolls were necessitated by the death of Imkong L Imchen, who had held the seat since 2003 and joined BJP in 2023. Congress, which does not have a single MLA in the state, seeks to open its account, while BJP has fielded Imkong's son Daochier I Imchen in hopes of retaining it.

DAOCHIER I IMCHEN

Age:	35
Party:	BJP
Education:	Masters in Political Science
Assets:	Rs 2.72 cr
Criminal cases:	Nil

T CHAIUKUMBA AO

Age:	66
Party:	Cong
Education:	BSc Agriculture & BA
Assets:	Rs 20 lakh
Criminal cases:	Nil

I ABENJANG

Age:	49
Party:	National People's Party
Education:	Higher Secondary
Assets:	Rs 39.41 lakh
Criminal cases:	Nil

Dharmanagar (Tripura)

Bypoll was necessitated after BJP MLA Biswabandhu Sen's death. BJP has fielded Jahar Chakraborti, a party loyalist and son-in-law of veteran leader Rasik Ranjan Goswami.
CPI(M) has fielded ex-MLA Amitabha Datta while Cong's Chayan Bhattacharya looks to win the urban centre it narrowly lost in 2023.

CHAYAN BHATTACHARYA

Age:	63
Party:	Cong
Education:	Madhyamik pass
Assets:	Rs 30 lakh
Criminal cases:	1

AMITABHA DATTA

Age:	67
Party:	CPI(M)
Education:	LLB
Assets:	Rs 84.92 lakh
Criminal cases:	1

JAHAR CHAKRABORTI

Age:	58
Party:	BJP
Education:	BA
Assets:	Rs 1.9 cr
Criminal cases:	Nil

'BJP FEARS DEFEAT'

HC cancels Ponda bypoll in Goa; Congress to move SC

The Bombay High Court has declared "null and void" the Election Commission of India's notification for the Ponda Assembly by-election in Goa, effectively cancelling the 9 April poll. The Congress said it will challenge the order in the Supreme Court.
A division bench of Justices Valmiki Menezes and Amit Jamsandekar of the Goa bench passed the order on petitions filed by two voters. They had questioned the validity of the notification, arguing that less than one year remains in the current Assembly's term.
The bypoll was necessitated following the death of former Goa minister Ravi Naik in October last year.
Petitioners contended that under the Representation of the People Act, conducting a by-election is not mandatory if the remainder of the Assembly's tenure is under a year. They argued that any newly elected MLA would serve only for a few months. Reacting to the verdict, Congress leader and Central Working Committee member Girish Chodankar said the party would file a special leave petition in the apex court once the detailed order is available.
Chodankar alleged that the ruling BJP, fearing defeat, "connived" with the poll body to delay and ultimately derail the election, a charge the party has not officially responded to. —PTI

J&K LG terminates 2 govt staff over terror links

JAMMU, 8 APRIL

Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha terminated two government employees on Wednesday for their alleged links with terror outfits, including Lashkar-e-Taiba and Hizbul Mujahideen, official sources said. Farhat Ali Khanday, a Class-IV education employee in Ramban, was dismissed for allegedly working with Hizbul Mujahideen. First arrested in 2011, later bailed, he allegedly continued facilitating militants. Mohammad Shafi Dar, a rural development employee, was dismissed for allegedly aiding Lashkar-e-Taiba by providing logistics, safe houses, and intelligence. He was caught in April 2025 with an AK-56 rifle and a grenade. The dismissals were carried out under Article 311(2)(c) of the Constitution as part of the administration's "zero-tolerance to terror" policy. *—PTI*

Govt gets notice over action against whistleblower

EW DELHI, 8 APRIL

The NHRC has issued a notice to the Health Ministry, FSSAI and Delhi Police following a complaint that "action" was taken against "whistleblowers" who had raised their voice against alleged wrongdoing in the larger public interest, according to the proceedings of the case. The rights panel also sought an action taken report within two weeks. The complainant in the case has claimed that some persons submitted "fraudulent" documents during the recruitment process and the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) also conducted an "internal inquiry" into the case and found them "guilty". The complainant also alleged that an FIR in March 2026 was registered "against them" (people raising the issue) for reporting findings as recorded in an official internal inquiry report, it says. *—PTI*

—ANI

Veteran Cong leader Mohsina Kidwai is no more

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

Veteran Congress leader and former union minister Mohsina Kidwai, who served under prime ministers Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, passed away on Wednesday at the age of 94. Kidwai suffered from age-related ailments and took her last breath at Noida's Metro Hospital early on Wednesday morning. Congress leaders, including President Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi, mourned the passing of "titan" Mohsina Kidwai, hailing her immense contributions. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Shashi Tharoor added that the party would deeply miss her wisdom and guidance. According to Kidwai's son-in-law, Razi Ur Rehman Kidwai, she was laid to rest at the graveyard in Nizamuddin at 5pm. *—PTI*

TVK candidate defeated even before election

CHENNAI, 8 APRIL

The nomination of TVK and popular film star Vijay's candidate for the Edappadi constituency has been rejected for want of necessary number of 10 proposers which would have enable him to enter the election contest. This leaves the party without any candidate from the Salem district seat, against AIADMK Chief Edappadi K Palaniswami. The candidate in question Arunkumar M could collect only eight signatures and another candidate, Nithya submitted just seven. Furthermore, Arunkumar is reportedly missing as party cadres suspect he might have been kidnapped. He had failed to appear for the scrutiny of his papers. *—Agencies*

Can non-devotees question Sabarimala customs: SC

Petition alleges discrimination against women at religious sites

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the Centre how persons who are not devotees of Lord Ayyappa could challenge the customs of the Sabarimala temple in Kerala.

The remark was made by a nine-judge Constitution bench hearing petitions related to discrimination against women at religious places, including the Sabarimala temple in Kerala, and on the ambit and scope of religious freedom practised by multiple faiths.

The bench comprises Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, Justices BV Nagarathna, MM Sundresh, Ahsanuddin Amanullah, Aravind Kumar, Augustine George Masih, Prasanna B Varale, R Mahadevan and Joymalya Bagchi.

The top court has framed seven questions on the scope of religious freedom.

One of the questions was whether a person not belonging to a religious denomination or religious group can question a practice of that "religious denomination or religious group" by filing a public interest litigation (PIL).

Sabarimala Sree Ayyappa Temple in Sabarimala hill, Pathanamthitta district, in Kerala *—PTI*

As the bench was about to rise for the day, Justice Nagarathna sought to know from Solicitor General Tushar Mehta as to who were the petitioners in the Sabarimala case.

"What follows from what you have just submitted is that the original petitioners are not devotees. No devotee has approached this court challenging this. Then, who are the writ petitioners who are assailing this?" she asked. Mehta replied that the original petitioner is a lawyers' body called Indian Young Lawyers Association.

Justice Nagarathna said, "They are not devotees. But let us be clear. Can any devotee of Lord Ayyappa file a writ petition challenging this? If a non-devotee, a person who is not concerned with that temple, challenges it, can this court entertain such a writ petition?

Meanwhile, the Centre on Wednesday told the Supreme Court that the two landmark judgements on decriminalising adultery and same-sex consensual relationships were based on the subjective application of "constitutional morality" and should be declared as "not a good law". *—PTI*

DEATH TOLL RISES TO 5

On Tuesday militants allegedly hurled a bomb at a house in Moirang Tronglaobi, killing 2 children and leaving their mother injured *—PTI*

Manipur remains tense after violence over bomb attack

IMPHAL, 8 APRIL

No new violence was reported across five valley districts in Manipur on Wednesday, but tensions remain high after violence broke out in Bishnupur district on Tuesday when militants allegedly hurled a bomb at a house in Moirang Tronglaobi, killing a five-year-old boy and his six-month-old sister and injuring their mother.

Angered by the incident, around 400 people attacked a CRPF camp, prompting security forces to open fire, leaving three dead and about 19 others injured. The protesters were unhappy with the security forces for allegedly failing to take action against the militants.

Internet services were temporarily suspended for three days from 2pm on Tuesday; however, the Manipur government conditionally lifted the suspension of broadband services in five valley districts on Wednesday

Manipur Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh on Wednesday chaired a Unified Command meeting to review the prevailing law and order situation in the state.

Soon after the bomb attack, Singh termed it a "barbaric act" and "an outright assault on humanity and a direct attempt to derail peace in Manipur".

Meanwhile, Home Minister Govindas Konthoujam urged protesters not to enter the CRPF. A probe will be conducted by the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

At least 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in the ethnic violence between Imphal Valley-based Meiteis and hills-based Kuki-Zo groups in Manipur since May 2023.

The state has been under President's rule since February 2025. *—PTI*

Luthra brothers get bail in Goa nightclub fire case

PANAJI, 8 APRIL

A Goa court granted bail to Saurabh Luthra and Gaurav Luthra, the owners of the gutted nightclub 'Birch by Romeo Lane,' in a forgery case on Wednesday, paving the way for their release from jail. The brothers had earlier secured bail in a case connected to the blaze in last December that killed 25.

Advocate Parag Rao, representing the Luthras, said that Judicial Magistrate First Class (Mapusa) Jude Sequeira granted regular bail to the accused in the forgery case. With this verdict, Rao said, the brothers will be released from jail. Rao said his clients have been asked to report to the Mapusa police station for the next five days. "We are waiting for the detailed judgment," he said.

The case pertains to allegations that the Luthra brothers used forged documents, including a fake no-objection certificate (NOC), to obtain permissions and an excise licence for operating their nightclub in North Goa. Police said the alleged forged NOC was later used to get regulatory clearances. A sessions court at Mapusa had granted bail to the two brothers on 1 April in a case related to the fire at the 'Birch by Romeo Lane' nightclub. *—PTI*

Khera moves HC, seeks bail in case filed by Assam govt

HYDERABAD, 8 APRIL

Congress leader Pawan Khera on Wednesday moved the Telangana High Court seeking anticipatory bail in a case filed against him by the Assam government on his allegations against Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's wife.

Khera, who showed his residential address in Hyderabad, requested the court to release him on bail in the event of his arrest.

The petition was filed on 7 April. It will be taken up by the court on 9 April. *—PTI*

Tweets by Rana Ayyub communal: Delhi HC

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday termed certain tweets by journalist **Rana Ayyub** "highly derogatory, inflammatory and communal" as it sought her stand on a petition seeking removal of the content from social media.

Justice Purushaindra Kumar Kaurav, who was hearing a lawyer's petition alleging that Ayyub's tweets insulted Hindu Deities and "revered historical figures," observed that even an FIR was also directed to be registered against her in connection with the tweets and called upon the Centre, Delhi Police and X to "work in tandem" and "do the needful within 24 hours."

"Let the matter be called day after. Action is necessary in view of the highly derogatory, inflammatory and communal tweets by respondent no. 4 (Ayyub), pursuant to which FIR has also been directed against respondent no. 4 by a court of competent jurisdiction," the court ordered.

Observing that the "matter requires consideration," the court issued a notice to the Centre, Ayyub as well as X on the petition seeking the immediate removal of the "highly derogatory, inflammatory, and communal tweets" by Ayyub.

Petitioner Amita Sachdeva said she is a follower of Sanatan Dharm, and that a court had directed the registration of an FIR holding that the journalist's tweets constitute cognisable offences. *—PTI*

HC rejects AgustaWestland middleman's plea

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday dismissed a petition by alleged middleman Christian Michel James in the Rs 3,600-crore AgustaWestland VVIP chopper scam case seeking his release from jail.

Justices Navin Chawla and Ravinder Dudeja said there was no merit in the petition by the British national, who was extradited from Dubai in December 2018. A detailed copy of the verdict is awaited.

In his petition, James assailed a provision of the India-UAE extradition treaty. He also challenged a trial court order of 7 August 2025 by which his application under Section 436A of the CrPC for his release from jail was rejected.

AgustaWestland VVIP chopper scam accused Christian Michel James *—PTI*

James challenged Article 17 of the treaty, signed in 1999, which allows the requesting state (in this case India) to prosecute extradited persons not only for the specific offence for which extradition was done, but also for connected offences.

- AJames challenged Article 17 of the treaty, signed in 1999, which allows the requesting state to prosecute extradited persons not only for the specific offence for which extradition was done, but also for connected offences.

It was contended that an extradited person can be prosecuted only for the offences for which extradition took place, and not for connected offences.

After his extradition, James was arrested by the CBI and the Enforcement Directorate (ED). *—PTI*

AGED BETWEEN 2-4

Mystery disease kills R'than's 5 kids in 5 days

JAIPUR, 8 APRIL

Five children, including two siblings, have died within five days from a mysterious illness in Rajasthan's Salumber district, officials said on Wednesday.

The children, aged between two and four years, reportedly developed symptoms such as fever and vomiting and died within 24 hours, they said.

The cases were reported from Lalpura and Ghata villages in the Lasadiya sub-division, where health department teams have been deployed to collect samples and monitor the situation.

Officials identified the deceased as Deepak, 4, his brother Laxman, 3, and Seema, 4, from Lalpura village, and Rahul, 4, and Kajal, 2, from Ghata village.

Eight other children are currently undergoing treatment at hospitals in Salumber and Udaipur, officials said.

Additional District Magistrate Dinesh Rai Sapela said screening of residents was carried out in the affected villages, which have over 560 households.

"Medical teams have conducted screening and any person showing symptoms will receive treatment," he said, urging villagers to immediately visit the nearest health centre if children show any signs of illness.

Chief Medical and Health Officer Mahendra Parmar said samples have been sent to RNT Medical College for testing, and the exact cause of the illness will be known only after reports are received.

As a precautionary measure, teams from the animal husbandry department also sprayed disinfectants in cattle sheds in Ghata village.

Local MLA Thawarchand Damor urged residents to seek immediate medical attention after the onset of symptoms and to avoid superstition. *—PTI*

Mamata to move court again over voter deletion in WB SIR

KOLKATA, 8 APRIL

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday hit out at the BJP and the Election Commission over voter deletions during the SIR exercise and said her party will move a court again to resist the removal of electors from the rolls.

Her comments came after nearly 91 lakh voters' names were deleted from the electoral rolls following the completion of the SIR in the state.

"You will not be able to defeat the TMC by deleting names. We will move a court again to resist the exclusion of names," Banerjee said while attacking her principal challenger BJP over the roll revision exercise. Criticising the panel over the SIR process, she said, "We will fight legally to get the names included on the list as per the Constitution..."

Meanwhile, seeking to turn her filing of nomination for the Bhabanipur seat into a political counteroffensive against BJP's call for "paribartan", she marched from her Kalighat residence to submit her papers. "Everything in my life began from here. I thank and salute the people of Bhabanipur," she said. *—PTI*

Cal HC grants bail to Saradha Ponzi scam accused

KOLKATA, 8 APRIL

The Calcutta High Court on Wednesday granted conditional bail to multi-crore Saradha ponzi scam accused Sudipta Sen in the last two of the 300-odd criminal cases against him, paving the way for his release from jail after 13 years.

Sen has already been granted bail in all the other cases registered against him, including four criminal cases by the CBI. The Saradha group, headed by Sen, allegedly defrauded lakhs of people through a number of ponzi schemes. *—PTI*

DAY BEFORE ASSAM POLLS

Cong's candidate Suren Daimari quits party

GUWAHATI, 8 APRIL

A day before polling in Assam, Congress candidate for the Udalguri seat, **Suren Daimari**, on Wednesday announced he has quit the party and "surrendered" his candidature.

The Congress, however, said that he was yet to submit his resignation letter to the party.

A senior election commission official, when contacted, said Daimari's name will remain in the EVM, and people can still vote for him since the deadline for withdrawing nomination has long passed.

Earlier in the day, Daimari told reporters that he has resigned from the Congress and "surrendered" his candidature.

He claimed that after nominating him from the Udalguri seat, the Congress offered no support in campaigning. *—PTI*

Kharge regrets 'illiterate' remark against Gujarat people

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

Congress President **Mallikarjun Kharge** on Wednesday expressed regret over his controversial statement calling the people of Gujarat "illiterate", and said he has always had and will continue to have the highest of respect for the people of the state.

In a post on X, the Congress president said, "Some remarks of mine in a recent election speech in Kerala are being deliberately misinterpreted. Even so, I express my sincere regret.

"It was never my intention to hurt the sentiments of the people of Gujarat for whom I have always had and will continue to have the highest of respect."

Separately, in Guwahati, the RSS has filed complaints at two police stations in Assam against Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge for allegedly comparing the ideology of the organisation and the BJP with a 'poisonous snake' at an election rally.

The complaints were filed to seek legal action over alleged "derogatory, provocative, and communally sensitive statements made during a recent election rally in south Assam, a RSS spokesman said. *—PTI*

Missile alerts persist in West Asia despite US-Iran ceasefire

DUBAI, 8 APRIL

Missile alerts rang out across several West Asiaon Wednesday, hours after Iran and the US announced a two-week ceasefire, raising doubts of its immediate effectiveness.

Sirens were reported in Israel, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait.

In Abu Dhabi, a gas processing facility was set ablaze following incoming Iranian fire, officials said, while the UAE confirmed its air defence systems were actively intercepting a missile barrage. Bahrain's Interior Ministry also announced activation of its missile alert system.

In Iran, state television reported that an oil refinery on Lavan Island was struck around 10 am, hours after the ceasefire announcement. Firefighters were working to contain the blaze and no casualties were reported.

It remains unclear who carried out the attack. The continued exchanges have highlighted uncertainty over whether all military units are complying with the ceasefire. Throughout the conflict, Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard has exercised significant operational control, with individual commanders deciding targets and timing, often sidelining political leadership. Whether these units have agreed to halt attacks remains in question.

Missile and drone fire has continued in the region, suggesting confusion over the ceasefire's scope and timing.

Analysts note that in many Middle East conflicts, last-minute strikes are often launched as parties seek to claim advantage before hostilities formally cease.

Authorities in Abu Dhabi said 375 people were detained during the conflict for filming sensitive locations and "disseminating false information" on social media. The detainees, from various countries, have been referred to prosecutors. Gulf nations have intensified crackdowns on such activity, with hundreds reportedly detained.

Regional leaders expressed cautious hope. Lebanon's President Joseph Aoun said the agreement could be a "first step" towards a comprehensive settlement and called for Israeli withdrawal from Lebanese territory and disarmament of non-state groups.

Kuwait hopes for a "permanent" resolution and urged adherence to the truce, while Saudi called for keeping the Strait of Hormuz open without restrictions under international law. —*PTI*

Ceasefire excludes Lebanon as Israeli strikes continue

Israel reportedly left out of peace talks between Iran & US

- The diplomatic talks mediated in Pakistan between the US and Iran appear to have concluded without Israeli's direct involvement. US President Donald Trump informed Isreaeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of the ceasefire shortly before announcing it. Israel says the pause does not extend to operations against Hezbollah in Lebanon.

JERUSALEM, 8 APRIL

Israel has supported US President Donald Trump's decision to suspend strikes against Iran for two weeks, while making clear the pause does not extend to operations against Hezbollah in Lebanon, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said on Wednesday.

In a statement, the PMO said Israel backs the US move "subject to Iran immediately opening the straits and stopping all attacks on the US, Israel and countries in the region".

It also endorsed Washington's efforts to ensure Iran no longer poses a nuclear, missile or terror threat.

The diplomatic talks mediated in Pakistan between the US and Iran appear to have concluded without Israel's direct involvement. Trump informed Netanyahu of the ceasefire shortly before announcing it.

However, Israel ruled out any halt to its campaign in Lebanon, stating unequivocally that "the two-week ceasefire does not include Lebanon".

Israeli forces continue ground operations in southern Lebanon and airstrikes on Hezbollah strongholds, aimed at degrading the group's ability to target northern Israel.

An Israeli military spokesperson confirmed operations were ongoing and urged residents in southern Lebanon to move north of the Zahrani River. Strikes continued into Wednesday morning, including drone attacks in Qana and al-Qleileh, and artillery fire in the south. Earlier, an airstrike in Saida killed eight people and injured 22, according to Lebanon's health ministry.

Iran's reported 10-point peace plan, which Trump has accepted as a basis for talks, calls for an end to hostilities against all elements of the "axis of resistance", including Hezbollah. However, Trump's ceasefire announcement focused solely on Iran, leaving Lebanon's status unclear.

Netanyahu told Israel's security cabinet there would be no extension of any Iran ceasefire to Lebanon, a position backed by political and military leaders.

The conflict in Lebanon, now approaching five weeks, and has displaced over 1.1 million people. —*PTI*

> I welcome the ceasefire agreement reached over night, which will bring a moment of relief to the region and the world. Together with our partners we must do all we can to support and sustain this ceasefire, turn it into a lasting agreement and re-open the Strait of Hormuz
>
> -Keir Starmer, British PM

> This development is crucial for India. We were spending an extra $270 million a day on oil through spot purchases. Domestically, the situation was becoming difficult; in Delhi, for example, people were struggling to get gas for cooking, and workers from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh were even starting to return home.
>
> -KP Fabian, former diplomat

> We welcome the agreement between President Trump and the Iranian regime to unblock the Hormuz Strait and cease fire. American decisiveness works. We believe it is time for sufficient decisiveness to force Moscow to cease fire and end its war against Ukraine.
>
> - Andrii Sybiha, Ukraine's Foreign Affairs Minister

> There has never been such a political disaster in all of our history. Israel wasn't even at the table when decisions were made concerning the core of our national security. The military carried out everything that was asked of but Netanyahu failed politically, failed strategically
>
> - Yair Lapid, Leader Opposition in Israeli Parliament

PAK PM'S X POST SHOWS 'DRAFT' MSG HAILING CEASEFIRE

ISLAMABAD, 8 APRIL

A social media post by Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has triggered widespread debate after an apparent "draft" was mistakenly posted on X and edited.

The incident quickly drew attention online, with users scrutinising the edit history and questioning the circumstances behind the initial post.

The controversy began when the Prime Minister's account shared a message that included the heading: "Draft - Pakistan's PM Message on X." The inclusion of the word "Draft" suggested that the post may not have been intended for public release in its original form. Within a short span, the tweet was edited, removing the draft label but retaining the core content. While the content remained largely unchanged, the removal of the "Draft" tag did little to contain the reaction.

References to Donald Trump and the strategic Strait of Hormuz added geopolitical weight to the message, amplifying curiosity around its intent. —*ANI*

Oman denies 'toll at Hormuz' claims

Oman said on Wednesday it has no plans to charge transit fees for passage through the Strait of Hormuz, hours after Iran included the provision to a ceasefire agreement with the US. Iran proposed a joint fee structure to be imposed by Iran and Oman.

However, Omani Transport Minister Said bin Hamoud bin Saeed Al Maawali confirmed that Oman is in agreements preventing charges on ships passing through the Strait. Gulf countries, including the UAE and Qatar, also oppose such fees. —*ANI*

'China urged Iran towards ceasefire'

China, Iran's largest trade partner, reportedly urged Iran towards a ceasefire in the US war, sources say. Chinese officials were in touch with Iranian officials amid negotiations, although Beijing also used the influence of intermediaries, including Pakistan, Turkey and Egypt. China's Foreign Ministry stated that, "All parties need to end this war that should not have happened in the first place."

Protesters in Iran express outrage at US and Israel

TEHRAN, 8 APRIL

Pro-government demonstrators in the streets of Iran's capital Wednesday morning after the ceasefire had been announced screamed: "Death to America, death to Israel, death to compromisers!" They also burned American and Israeli flags in the street. It shows the ongoing anger from hard-liners, who had been preparing for what many assumed would be an apocalyptical battle with the United States. —*PTI*

Pro-Iran hackers breached US infra: Federal agencies

WASHINGTON, 8 APRIL

Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, FBI and the National Security Agency issued the warning on Tuesday, after hackers allied with Iran used internet-connected devices used to control machinery used in several sectors.

They offered no details about the attacks but said they aimed to disrupt operations and cause financial harm.

The bulletin urged any US entity that uses the controllers to check their cyber defences. A number of cyberattacks targeting US and Israel have been attributed to pro-Iran hackers since US-Israeli strikes began.

Critical infrastructure like ports and water plants could be targeted by Iranian hackers or other independent groups. —*PTI*

—*ANI*

6 militants killed in intel-based op in Balochistan

KARACHI, 8 APRIL

Pakistani security forces have reportedly killed six militants during an intelligence-based operation in the troubled Balochistan province, an official reported on Wednesday.

Pakistan's Counter Terrorism Department official Mehtab Rehmani claimed that the militants belonging to a banned outfit were killed in the Kirdgab area of Mastung town on Tuesday. Rehmani said the operation was carried out after intelligence reports that militants were hiding in the area and preparing an attack. The security forces cordoned off the area and launched the operation, killing six militants. However, some of the militants did reportedly manage to escape into the mountains, the official said. Rehmani has also reported that a large quantity of arms and ammunition was seized from the militant group's possession. —*PTI*

N Korea fires at sea to mock Seoul's 'warmer ties'

SEOUL, 8 APRIL

North Korea fired several short-range ballistic missiles toward the sea Wednesday in its second launch event in two days, South Korea's military said, hours after a senior North Korean official released crude insults against Seoul's hopes for warmer relations.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the missiles lifted off from North Korea's eastern coastal Wonsan area and flew about 240 kilometers (150 miles) each in a direction toward the North's eastern waters. It said South Korea maintains a readiness to repel any provocations by North Korea under a solid military alliance with the US.

The back-to-back launches came after North Korea made it clear that it has no intentions of improving ties with South Korea.

On Tuesday night, Jang Kum Chol, first vice minister at Pyongyang's Foreign Ministry, said South Korea would always remain the North's "most hostile enemy state." He derided South Korea as "world-startling fools" engaged in wishful thinking over a recent statement by Kim Yo Jong, the influential sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

After South Korean President Lee Jae Myung expressed regret over alleged drone flights into North Korea, Kim Yo Jong praised him for what she called honesty and courage, but reiterated a threat to retaliate if such flights recur. —*PTI*

Discussed with Trump a strong future for India, US: Sergio Gor

WASHINGTON, 8 APRIL

US Ambassador to New Delhi, **Sergio Gor**, has said that he has discussed with President Donald Trump to build a "strong future" for India and the US.

Gor met Trump over dinner on Tuesday. His meeting with President Trump coincided with the US and Iran agreeing to a two-week ceasefire following nearly six weeks of military hostilities.

Gor also mentioned Trump's unwavering determination to bring global stability.

"Just had an outstanding dinner with President Trump. We discussed his unwavering determination to bring global stability, the historic achievements of his presidency, the strong future of India-US ties, and so much more! A very memorable evening as history unfolded in real time," Gor posted on X on Wednesday.

The dinner comes as Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri reached Washington DC on Wednesday to review bilateral trade and defence ties, and discuss the escalating crisis in West Asia.

The visit comes as both sides work to stabilise the ties after a spell of uncertainty and strain. The relations witnessed a major downturn after Washington imposed punitive tariffs on India, and President Donald Trump made controversial assertions regarding his role in de-escalating the India-Pakistan military clashes last May.

Meanwhile, Gor earlier met US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick here and discussed the commercial roadmap for the two countries.

Gor said he discussed with Lutnick a new Memorandum of Understanding that seeks to connect India's AI scale with the American AI ecosystem, and also strong participation from New Delhi in the upcoming SelectUSA Summit near here. —*PTI*

ICE shoot a man during arrest in California

WASHINGTON, 8 APRIL

US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents shot and wounded a man in central California while trying to arrest him on Tuesday. The shooting occurred in Patterson, a city about 74 miles southeast of San Francisco.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said agents fired defensive shots at the suspect, Carlos Ivan Mendoza Hernandez, after he allegedly tried to run over one of the agents with his car.

Hernandez was wounded and hospitalised; officials say he is stable, but his family has not been allowed to see him.

DHS said Hernandez is wanted in El Salvador in connection with a murder. However, Hernandez's attorney Patrick Kolasinski, said authorities may have mistaken him for someone else with a similar name.

Silent dashcam footage shows three officers surrounding the vehicle. As the car reverses, at least two officers draw their weapons and point them at the driver. It remains unclear when shots were fired.

Kolasinski said Hernandez works as a labourer. He has a 2-year-old daughter and is engaged to a US citizen. The FBI is investigating the incident. —*PTI*

DIALOGUE TO CONTINUE

China-backed Pak-Afghan talks end without agreement

BEIJING, 8 APRIL

Week-long China-mediated talks between Pakistan and Afghanistan to end ongoing tensions have concluded without an agreement, though both sides agreed to explore a "comprehensive solution" to their differences.

The informal discussions, held from 1 to 7 April in Urumqi, Xinjiang, marked the first major diplomatic engagement since Pakistan's Operation Ghazab lil-Haq in February targeting alleged militant bases in Afghanistan.

China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said the talks were "candid and pragmatic", with all sides adopting a problem-focused and result-oriented approach. The three countries agreed that dialogue and consultation remain the most effective way to resolve complex disputes.

Terrorism emerged as a core issue. Pakistan accuses the Taliban-led Afghan government of harbouring militants from the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), a claim Kabul denies, urging Islamabad to address its own militancy.

China, while not endorsing Pakistan's allegations, flagged its own concerns over Uyghur militants linked to the East Turkestan Islamic Movement in Afghanistan.

Complicating matters, a recent UN experts' report said Pakistan had not provided credible evidence linking TTP attacks to Afghan authorities and termed Islamabad's strikes a violation of international law. Pakistan rejected the findings.

Officials reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining dialogue, with China noting the "significance" of the Urumqi process and the need for stable ties for regional peace. —*PTI*

Silver surges to '2.51L/kg; Gold climbs '1.56L/10g

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

Silver prices surged Rs 11,000 to Rs 2.51 lakh per kilogram in the national capital on Wednesday, while gold advanced to Rs 1.56 lakh per 10g amid strong global cues after the US and Iran agreed to a two-week ceasefire. According to the All India Sarafa Association, silver zoomed by Rs 11,000, or nearly 5 per cent, to Rs 2,51,000 per kg (inclusive of all taxes) from Tuesday's closing level of Rs 2,40,000 per kg. Gold of 99.9 per cent purity also appreciated by Rs 3,200, or 2.09 per cent, to Rs 1,56,400 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes). In the overseas markets, spot gold gained $97.48, or 2.07 per cent, to $4,803.33 per ounce, while silver was trading 6 per cent higher at $77.33 per ounce. *—PTI*

Adani to invest Rs 33,081 crore in Odisha

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

The Adani Group pledged three projects in Odisha, focusing on digital infrastructure, energy security, and manufacturing. Karan Adani, the Managing Director of Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone, detailed the projects at the ground breaking and inauguration ceremony of 36 industrial projects in Khordha. The total investment in Odisha stands at Rs 33,081 crore, creating 9,700 jobs, direct and indirect. The first project is a data centre in Info Valley, Bhubaneswar with an investment of Rs 800 crore. The second project is a thermal power plant near Cuttack with an investment of Rs 30,181 crore. The third project is focused on a cement unit near Cuttack, costing Rs 2,100-crore *—PTI*

Rupee surges 47P to close at 92.59 against USD

MUMBAI, 8 APRIL

The rupee appreciated 47 paise to close at 92.59 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday after US President Donald Trump announced the suspension of military strikes against Iran for two weeks, and the Reserve Bank kept the key benchmark rate unchanged with a neutral stance. Forex traders said investor sentiment got a boost after Governor Sanjay Malhotra assured that the steps taken on forex do not constitute a structural change. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 92.92 against the US dollar, then gained ground to touch 92.56 against the US dollar in initial trade and finally ended the day at 92.59 (provisional) against the greenback, registering a gain of 47 paise. Meanwhile, dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was down 0.96 per cent at 98.90. *—PTI*

Hemant Badri to head Flipkart's AI charter

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

Hemant Badri will lead Flipkart's artificial intelligence transformation charter, as the Walmart-owned e-commerce giant intensifies its push as an 'AI-first' organisation, CEO Kalyan Krishnamurthy said in an internal e-mail. Badri, the SVP and Head of Supply Chain, Customer Experience & Re-Commerce at Flipkart, will focus on identifying and operationalizing roles where AI can create the most impact, working in partnership with Balaji Thiagarajan, who will continue to provide strategic direction for the One Tech org and lead the technology strategy and engineering efforts for an AI-native Flipkart. AI-first at Flipkart means that intelligent systems should sit at the core of what is built, Krishnamurthy explained. *—PTI*

RBI projects FY27 retail Inflation at 4.6%

Real GDP growth for 6-27 estimated at 6.9%; crude price assumption upped to $85/barrel

MUMBAI, 8 APRIL

RBI'S APRIL MONETARY POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

- Benchmark interest rate (repo) remains unchanged at 5.25%
- Monetary policy stance retained at neutral
- FY27 GDP growth pegged at 6.9% compared to 7.6% in FY26
- Inflation is estimated at 4.6% in FY27
- The West Asia crisis is likely to impact the domestic economy
- Elevated energy, other commodity prices are a drag on domestic production in FY27
- RBI to remain proactive, to ensure sufficient liquidity in the banking system
- As on 3 April, India's forex reserves stood at USD 697.1 bn; adequate for 11 months of imports
- Next meeting of RBI's rate-setting panel scheduled for 3 to 5 June

The Reserve Bank on Wednesday projected retail inflation for the current financial year at 4.6 per cent, well within the government-mandated inflation target range of 4 per cent with a tolerance band of +/- 2 per cent.

The government has mandated the central bank to ensure inflation remains at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

Before the outbreak of the West Asia conflict, India's macroeconomic fundamentals exuded confidence with buoyant growth and low inflation. Conditions turned adverse in March with the widening of the conflict zone and its intensification.

The consumer price index (CPI) based retail inflation during April-June quarter (Q1) is estimated at 4 per cent; Q2 at 4.4 per cent; Q3 at 5.2 per cent; and Q4 at 4.7 per cent, Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra said, while unveiling the first bi-monthly monetary policy of the current fiscal year.

EXPECTS 6.9% ECONOMIC GROWTH

Malhotra said merchandise exports may be adversely affected by disruptions to key shipping routes and the concomitant rise in freight and insurance costs.

Taking all these factors into consideration, the RBI said real GDP growth for 2026-27 is projected at 6.9 per cent, with Q1 at 6.8 per cent; Q2 at 6.7 per cent; Q3 at 7 per cent; and Q4 at 7.2 per cent.

UPS CRUDE, EXCHANGE RATE BASELINE ASSUMPTIONS

RBI said the crude oil price assumption has been raised to USD 85 per barrel for FY27, from USD 70 per barrel in H2FY26. It also increased exchange rate projections to 94 against the US dollar during FY27, from 88 against the greenback during H2FY26, the report showed. *—PTI*

RBI decides to do away with banks' IFR norms

MUMBAI, 8 APRIL

- Banks currently maintain IFR as an additional buffer against depreciation in the value of their investments, subject to mark-to-market (MTM) requirements.

The RBI decided to dispense with the Investment Fluctuation Reserve (IFR), an additional buffer which banks were required to maintain to hedge against depreciation in the value of investments, in a move to support the capital adequacy of lenders.

Banks currently maintain IFR as an additional buffer against depreciation in the value of their investments, subject to mark-to-market (MTM) requirements.

Currently, commercial banks maintain capital charge for market risk and also follow revised norms on classification, valuation, and operation of investment portfolio. In consideration of these prudential requirements, it is proposed to dispense with the IFR requirement for commercial banks, RBI said in its statement on Developmental and Regulatory Policies on Wednesday.

The existing guidelines for other bank categories are also being revised to address the operational challenges encountered by such banks in complying with the regulatory thresholds on IFR and to harmonise instructions across bank categories.

RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra proposed on Wednesday to revise guidelines to facilitate better utilisation of bank boards' time. Draft directions regarding this would be released shortly. *—PTI*

'NO CREDIBLE EVIDENCE'

US court dismisses SEC fraud suit against Adani

NEW YORK, 8 APRIL

A US judge granted a request from billionaire **Gautam Adani** to schedule a hearing in his effort to dismiss a US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) fraud case, which he says lacks necessary jurisdiction as well as fails on multiple grounds.

This followed lawyers of Adani and his nephew, Sagar, filing a plea seeking dismissal of the case.

"The court has received Defendants' letter requesting a pre-motion conference on their anticipated motion to dismiss the Complaint. The court GRANTS that request and DIRECTS the parties" to schedule the pre-motion conference, the Eastern District court of New York said in its order.

In the filing, the Adanis' lawyers said there was no credible evidence supporting the alleged bribery scheme.

The SEC, they said, lacked necessary jurisdiction over the two men and that the alleged misstatements underpinning the case weren't actionable.

The case brought by SEC in November 2024 alongside a criminal complaint by the US Department of Justice, alleges that the Adanis sought to pay over USD 250 million in bribes to Indian officials to secure solar energy contracts and concealed the scheme from US investors and banks when they raised funds.

The Adani Group has denied all allegations, stating that none of its entities or executives has been charged under the US Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, and that Adani Green Energy - the renewable energy arm that raised the funds - is not a party to the proceedings.

While Gautam Adani chairs the Adani Group, Sagar Adani is executive director at Adani Green Energy.

The lawsuits had been stalled for over a year as the defendants, based in India, were not been served notices.

The group, which spans green energy, ports, realty, mining and news media, has continued to raise funds from global investors, including BlackRock, since the charges were filed. *—PTI*

Adani Group stocks rally

Adani Group stocks were in high demand on Wednesday, with Adani Green surging over 11 per cent, in tandem with a sharp rally in the broader equity market. Shares of Adani Green zoomed 11.38 per cent, Adani Energy Solutions soared 8.78 per cent, Adani Enterprises Ltd rallied 8.62 per cent and Adani Total Gas jumped 7.60 per cent on the BSE. Also, shares of NDTV climbed 6.48 per cent, Ambuja Cements jumped 6.28 per cent, Adani Ports edged higher by 5.28 per cent, ACC advanced 5.20 per cent and Adani Power rallied 3.55 per cent. The combined market valuation of all these firms stood at Rs 14.22 lakh crore. *—PTI*

Crude prices tumble 18% amid US-Iran ceasefire talks

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

Crude oil prices nosedived by 18 per cent to Rs 8,775 per barrel in futures trade on Wednesday, after the US and Iran agreed to a two-week ceasefire and the reopening of Strait of Hormuz, triggering heavy selling by traders as the geopolitical risk premium evaporated.

Snapping a three-day rally, crude oil futures for April delivery opened lower by 6 per cent to Rs 10,029 per barrel, its lower circuit limit, on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX).

Later, the contract extended losses, tumbling by Rs 1,894, or 17.75 per cent, to Rs 8,775 per barrel from previous close of Rs 10,669 per barrel.

Similarly, crude oil for May delivery also slumped by Rs 1,413, or 15 per cent, to Rs 8,012 per barrel, amid aggressive unwinding of long positions by investors. The contract had climbed nearly 3 per cent to touch a lifetime high of Rs 9,560 per barrel on 7 March before settling at Rs 9,425 per barrel on the MCX.

Global crude oil prices slipped below the USD 100 a barrel in Asian trading hours on Wednesday. This resulted in shares of oil marketing companies soaring, with Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd climbing 9 per cent to Rs 361.35 on the BSE. Shares of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd jumped 8.83 per cent to Rs 301.90 and Indian Oil Corporation climbed 8.21 per cent to Rs 145.55. *—PTI*

Investors get rich by Rs 16.25 lakh cr

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

Investors' wealth swelled by Rs 16.25 lakh crore on Wednesday, mirroring a sharp rally in the stock market where the BSE Sensex jumped nearly 4 per cent, after the US and Iran announced a two-week ceasefire.

Rising for the fifth day in a row, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 2,946.32 points or 3.95 per cent to settle at 77,562.90, registering its best trading day in five years. During the day, it surged 3,018.96 points or 4 per cent to 77,635.54.

Nifty climbed by 873.70 points or 3.78 per cent to end at 23,997.35.

Thanks to the sharp rally in equities, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies surged by Rs 16,25,093.09 crore to Rs 4,45,51,401.85 crore (USD 4.81 trillion).

From the Sensex pack, InterGlobe Aviation jumped the most by 8.16 per cent. Larsen & Toubro, Bajaj Finance, Mahindra & Mahindra, Axis Bank and Maruti were also among the prominent gainers. Tech Mahindra, Sun Pharma and Power Grid were the laggards. Interest rate-sensitive realty, auto and bank stocks were the leading winners.All sectoral indices ended higher.

WORLD MARKETS

DOW (US)	47,664.86	(2.27%)
S&P 500 (US)	6,777.19	(2.10%)
Nasdaq (US)	22,587.94	(2.58%)
Nikkei (Japan)	56,308.42	(5.39%)
Hang Seng (China)	25,893.03	(3.09%)
KOSPI (South Korea)	5,872.34	(6.87%)
DAX (Germany)	23,984.18	(4.64%)
FTSE 100 (UK)	10,593.45	(2.36%)
CAC 40 (Paris)	8,262.20	(3.29%)

Realty index jumped 6.76 per cent, auto (6.55 per cent), BSE PSU Bank (5.79 per cent), Bankex (5.72 per cent), Private Banks index (5.62 per cent), Financial Services (5.48 per cent), Services (5.22 per cent), Consumer Discretionary (5.11 per cent), and Industrials (4.87 per cent).

A total of 3,859 stocks advanced, while 537 declined and 101 remained unchanged on the BSE.

"While there are reasons to cheer the de-escalation in the near term, and Indian equities are likely to join the rebound, the recovery, like in other markets, remains conditional on what happens next," Dhananjay Sinha, CEO & Co-Head of Institutional Equities at Systematix Group, said. *—PTI*

Govt approves ₹41,534 cr fertilisers subsidy for kharif '26

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

The government on Wednesday approved a Rs 41,534 crore subsidy for Phosphatic and Potassic (P&K) fertilizers for the upcoming 2025-26 kharif season, up by 12 per cent from the year-ago period.

A meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the subsidy rates effective from April 1 till September 30, 2026.

The kharif (summer) crop planting begins with the onset of southwest monsoon from June.

For the kharif 2026 season, the government has fixed the subsidy rate for nitrogen at Rs 47.32 per kg, phosphate at Rs 52.76/ kg, potash Rs 2.38/kg and sulphur at Rs 3.16/kg.

The subsidy rate for nitrogen, phosphate and sulphur fertilisers has been increased for the kharif 2026 season, while subsidy rate for potash has been kept unchanged from the 2025 rabi season. *—PTI*

AVIATION STOCKS RISE; INDIGO JUMPS NEARLY 11%

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

- InterGlobe Aviation, the parent firm of IndiGo, zoomed 10.98 per cent to Rs 4,737.40 on the BSE.

Aviation stocks zoomed on Wednesday morning trade following a sharp decline in crude oil prices after the US and Iran announced a two-week ceasefire.

Easing of geopolitical stress led to a sharp fall in Brent crude oil prices, which tumbled 13 per cent to USD 94.94 per barrel.

InterGlobe Aviation, the parent firm of IndiGo, zoomed 10.98 per cent to Rs 4,737.40 on the BSE.

The stock of SpiceJet also jumped 4.99 per cent to reach its upper circuit limit of Rs 11.14.

"The announcement of a temporary two-week ceasefire between the US and Iran has significantly improved global risk appetite, easing concerns around prolonged conflict and potential supply disruptions," Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

Asian equities are trading higher, while a sharp pullback in crude oil prices — now below the USD 100 mark and trending toward the USD 91–96 range — offers a meaningful tailwind for India, he said.

"Lower oil prices help ease inflationary pressures, support the current account, and improve the broader macro outlook," he added. *—PTI*

AMID CHAIRMAN'S RESIGNATION

No governance issues at HDFC Bank: RBI Guv

MUMBAI, 8 APRIL

The Reserve Bank on Wednesday said HDFC Bank's board meeting minutes and other records are studied as part of supervision exercise, and reiterated that the largest private sector lender has not been found wanting on ethics and governance.

"I would like to reiterate that at no point during our supervision or after examining their records did any governance or conduct-related material issue come to our notice. Under our regular supervision, board minutes are also reviewed. Copies of the minutes are provided to us," RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said, replying to a specific question on HDFC Bank.

It can be noted that the resignation letter did not mention any specific reason beyond incongruence on ethics and values, and the bank's other board members also said they were "baffled" because Atanu Chakraborty did not cite any particular instances during their discussions either.

This led to questions over the efficacy of the current set of rules that led to the resignation of the bank's former chairman Atanu Chakraborty last month that was followed by a sharp correction in share prices.

The RBI brass on Wednesday said there is no need for a review.

Meanwhile, commenting on instances of frauds being reported with lenders such as IDFC Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank in context of the state government accounts, Malhotra opined this is a criminal activity done by a set of colluding individuals, and added that there is no need to change any rules to check such activity. *—PTI*

Women borrowers hold 26% of total credit: NITI Aayog

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

The National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) said on Wednesday in a report that women borrowers now hold a credit portfolio of Rs 76 lakh crore, accounting for 26% of the total credit. It notes that women's credit exposure has expanded 4.8 times after 2017, indicating a shift from access-led inclusion to progression-led participation.

The report requested by the Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) was prepared by TransUnion CIBIL and MicroSave Consulting (MSC).

Stressing the importance of expanding women's access to formal credit, CEO, NITI Aayog, Nidhi Chhibber said, "Economic development advances when participation in markets becomes broader. The findings of this report reflect how women are increasingly benefiting from these shifts."

The report said between December 2017 and December 2025, the number of credit-active women borrowers registered a compounded annual growth rate of 9 per cent, while credit penetration among women increased from 19 per cent to 36 per cent. The total credit outstanding to women grew from Rs 16 lakh crore in 2017 to Rs 76 lakh crore in 2025. *—PTI*

KKR brace for Shami challenge in LSG clash

LSG's strength lies in their power play bowling

KOLKATA, 8 APRIL

Out of tune and bereft of ideas, Kolkata Knight Riders may ring in sweeping changes in search of their first win of the season when they face a Mohammed Shami-inspired Lucknow Super Giants in the IPL, here on Thursday.

Shami is fresh from his outstanding 2/9 against Sunrisers Hyderabad, where he dismissed Abhishek Sharma and Travis Head in successive overs -- the same duo who had battered KKR the other day.

The 'local' man Shami, a fine exponent of straight seam bowling and movement, will relish the conditions at Eden Gardens and could emerge as a key threat for a KKR who are yet to win after three matches.

LSG's strength lies in their power play bowling, something evident when they reduced both Delhi Capitals and Sunrisers Hyderabad to identical scores of 26/4 early on. From 16/2 in two overs, KKR were fortunate to escape with a point after their match against Punjab Kings was washed out. Because of a trough stretching from Gangetic West Bengal to the Gulf of Mannar, rain has been constant over the past three days and is forecast for late Wednesday and early Thursday. However, with a late 7.30 pm start, the match is unlikely to be affected much, which should lift the mood.

- KKR may finally get Green bowling boost against LSG; Narine fit, Chakravarthy doubtful

Coming back to the contest, while Shami will be a major threat in the power play, tackling the rest of LSG's attack, including Prince Yadav and mystery spinner Digvesh Rathi, could also be decisive.

KKR, with its fragile batting, would make for an interesting contest early on.Match starts: 7.30 pm. —*PTI*

It felt like Mumbai Indians lacked purpose and intent with ball: Kumble

Mumbai Indians appeared to lack intent and purpose in their 27-run defeat to Rajasthan Royals, said former India captain Anil Kumble as he lauded young swashbuckler Vaibhav Sooryavanshi for his "brilliant" offensive against pace ace Jasprit Bumrah in an IPL clash in Guwahati. RR cruised to a comfortable win over Hardik Pandya's Mumbai Indians, powered by Yashasvi Jaiswal's scintillating unbeaten 77 and Sooryavanshi's 14-ball blitzkrieg of 39. Their performance set the tone for a 150-run total in the rain-shortened, 11-overs-a-side contest. Mumbai Indians fell well short, restricted to 123 for 9, with their entire top order failing to make an impact. This was the Rajasthan Royals' third consecutive win, while MI endured their second loss in three matches. "It felt like the Mumbai Indians lacked a bit of purpose and intent with the ball, and that certainly spilled over into the batting. It was always going to be a big task to score 151 in 11 overs," said Kumble on 'JioStar'. Kumble was amazed by how Sooryavanshi confidently took on a bowler of Bumrah's calibre, smashing a six off the very first delivery he faced.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

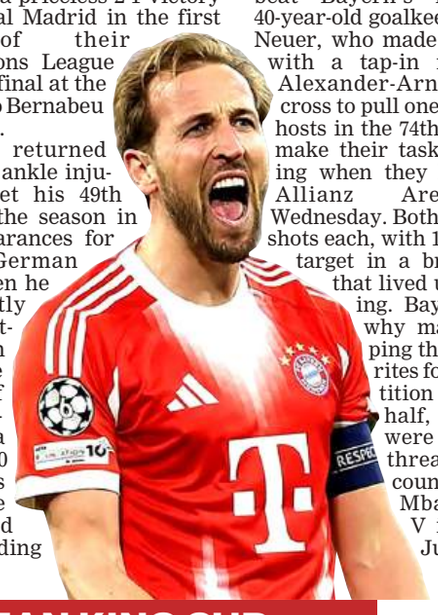
Arsenal's Kai Havertz celebrates scoring their first goal *X/@HAVERTZ*

Real Madrid loses game against Bayern Munich by 2-1

NEW DELHI, 6 JUNE

Harry Kane earned Bayern Munich a priceless 2-1 victory over Real Madrid in the first leg of their Champions League quarter-final at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium.

Kane returned from an ankle injury to net his 49th goal of the season in 41 appearances for the German side when he brilliantly side-footed in from the edge of the penalty area just 20 seconds into the second half, adding to Luis Diaz's clinical finish that came shortly before half-time. Kylian Mbappe finally beat Bayern's magnificent 40-year-old goalkeeper Manuel Neuer, who made nine saves, with a tap-in from Trent Alexander-Arnold's fine cross to pull one back for the hosts in the 74th minute and make their task less daunting when they head to the Allianz Arena next Wednesday. Both sides had 20 shots each, with 17 of them on target in a breathless tie that lived up to its billing. Bayern showed why many are tipping them as favourites for the competition in the first half, but Real were always a threat on the counter through Mbappe and Vinicius Junior.



Havertz strike gives Arsenal 1-0 advantage over Sporting

Arsenal substitute Kai Havertz scored a stoppage-time goal to snatch a 1-0 win at Sporting in the first leg of their Champions League quarterfinal on Tuesday night.

The German forward was found unmarked inside the box by Gabriel Martinelli before calmly slotting the ball past goalkeeper Rui Silva to settle a tactical encounter.

After a first half in which Sporting's Maxi Araujo and Arsenal's Noni Madueke struck the woodwork, the visiting side had a Martin Zubimendi effort disallowed before David Raya produced several late saves to deny the home side.

The deadlock was finally broken in added time by Havertz, who replaced the injured Martin Odegaard in the 70th minute. —*PTI*

PTI

Pakistan Hockey ropes in new head coach for men

KARACHI, 8 APRIL

In what has come as a "shock" to the players, the Pakistan Hockey Federation has decided to replace their current head coach, Australia's Colin Batch, with former Olympian Manzoor ul Hasan for the upcoming FIH Pro Nations League and the World Cup. Sources close to the players said they were stunned to learn that instead of Batch, the PHF had gone ahead and named Manzoor as head coach. Manzoor is a celebrated defender who played in the 70s and 80s. A player, on condition of anonymity. said on Wednesday that the PHF's decision was "recipe for disaster". "We were all happy that Colin Batch, who is a qualified coach and aware of the modern-day hockey requirements, would be guiding us in two major events, including the World Cup, and now we get this shock," he said.—*PTI*

PTI

Matteo Berrettini thumps Medvedev 6-0, 6-0

NEW DELHI, 27 FEB

Daniil Medvedev suffered an embarrassing 6-0, 6-0 humbling at the hands of Matteo Berrettini in the second round of the Monte Carlo Masters on Wednesday. The seventh seed missed two break points in the opening game and then completely unravelled, making 30 unforced errors and serving five double faults. Medvedev did not win more than two points in any of the last 11 games, and his frustrations boiled over in the second set, smashing his racquet into the court four times. Berrettini wrapped up the double-bagel victory, the first such defeat of former world number one Medvedev's career, in just 49 minutes.—*PTI*

SAY Table Tennis C'ships: Indian teams begin on a winning note

SHIMLA, 8 APRIL

Indian girls stamped their authority with a 3-0 victory over Sri Lanka, while the boys routed Maldives by a similar margin to begin their campaign in the ITTF-ATTU South Asia Youth Table Tennis Championships 2026 on a winning note in Shimla on Wednesday.

Having received a higher seeding, the Indian Under-19 girls made an immediate impact.

Jennifer Varghese, Ananya Muralidharan, and Prisha Goel registered straight or four-game wins to complete a comprehensive sweep against Sri Lanka.

The Under-19 girls remain the only category competing for qualification to the Asian Youth Championships.

However, the continental event, originally slated for June in Muscat, has been postponed owing to the West Asia crisis.

In the Under-15 boys' section, India mirrored that dominance with a 3-0 rout of Maldives in the second round.

Aditya Das, Akshay Kirikara, and Akash Rajavelu conceded very few points across their matches, underlining India's depth at the sub-junior level.

Under 19 Girls: India bt Sri Lanka 3-0 (Jennifer Varghese bt Shamaisha 12-10 11-8 11-9, Ananya Muralidharan bt Tamadi 11-7 11-7 12-10, Prisha Goel bt Sandin Mudiyanselage 8-11 11-4 11-5 11-9).

Under 15 Boys: India bt Maldives 3-0 (Aditya Das bt Mlohamed Rafiu 11-3 11-3 11-2, Akshay Kirikara bt Faaz Latheef 11-2 11-5 11-2, Akash Rajavelu bt Ayoob Saleem 11-4 11-6 11-3). —*PTI*

BILLIE JEAN KING CUP

Vaishnavi, Sahaja power India to 3-0 sweep over New Zealand

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

Young debutant Vaishnavi Adkar and Sahaja Yamalapalli notched up convincing wins as India bounced back in style, blanking New Zealand 3-0 in their second Asia/Oceania Group I tie of the Billie Jean King Cup here on Wednesday.

Vaishnavi and Sahaja had endured contrasting defeats as India went down 1-2 to Thailand in their rain-hit opener.

However, the hosts scripted a swift turnaround, with both players showing composure under pressure in their respective singles matches against New Zealand, who are without their star player, Lulu Sun.

Entrusted with the responsibility again, Vaishnavi showed marked improvement, executing her shots with far greater control to outplay Aishi Das 6-2, 6-4 in one hour and 30 minutes.

Sahaja then outclassed Valentina Ivanov 6-1, 6-3 in the second singles to keep their campaign alive.

In the doubles, Rutuja Bhosale and Ankita Raina recorded a 6-4, 6-2 win over the combination of world No. 11 Erin Routliffe and world No. 338 Monique Barry to complete the drubbing.

Vaishnavi capitalised on Das' inconsistency to take control of the opening set.

Despite trailing 15-40 early on serve, the Indian earned the first break as Das squandered a 40-15 lead with a string

INDIA BEATS CHINESE TAIPEI TO STAY ALIVE IN QFS RACE

PATHUM THANI, 8 APRIL

India beat Chinese Taipei 3-1 at the Pathum Thani Stadium in Thailand on Wednesday to keep itself in contention for a place in the AFC Under-20 Women's Asian Cup 2026 quarterfinals.

The last time the Indian side reached the quarterfinals in this tournament was in 2004, which was also the last time the side played the U-20 Women's Asian Cup.

However, the Young Tigresses will need to hope the Group B-match between Uzbekistan and Jordan later in the day ends in a draw. A winner in that fixture and India's hopes of qualifying as one of the two best third-placed teams will evaporate.

Bhumika Devi Khumukcham (26') and Sibani Devi (32', 87') were on target for India.—*PTI*

Shooting WC: Indian air pistol shooters disappoint

GRANADA, 8 APRIL

Indian shooters endured a disappointing outing in the men's 10m air pistol event at the ISSF Pistol/Rifle World Cup here on Wednesday, with all three participants failing to qualify for the finals, just a day after clinching the mixed team gold with a world-record performance.

Young Mukesh Nelavalli, who had shattered the world record en route to winning gold in the 10m air pistol mixed team event on the opening day on Tuesday, finished 14th with an aggregate score of 579, missing out on the eight-shooter final by a considerable margin. On a day when even world No. 1 Hu Kai of China struggled finishing 15th with a score of 578M Mukesh was undone by two subpar series of 94 and 95 in the opening and closing rounds. In between, he posted solid scores of 98, 98, 97, and 97 in the six-series qualification stage. Paris Olympics gold medallist Yu Xie delivered a superb performance, shooting 588 to top the qualifying round and advance to the finals in first place, with series scores of 98, 99, 97, 98, 99, and 97.

Malik, the 10m air pistol mixed team gold medallist at the 2024 Cairo World Cup, finished 22nd with a total of 577 (95, 96, 96, 97, 95, 98). Meanwhile, the third Indian, Pramod competing as a senior for the first time in an international event shot 574 to place 39th in a field of 86 shooters. —*PTI*

Deepika, Savita return for India women's hockey tour to Argentina

NEW DELHI, 8 APRIL

Salima Tete will continue to lead India, while drag-flicker Deepika and experienced goalkeeper Savita make a comeback to the 24-member national women's hockey squad announced on Wednesday for the tour of Argentina later this month.

The tour will also see the return of defender Jyoti and forward Mumtaz Khan, strengthening both ends of the field.

India will play four matches against Argentina from April 13 to 17 in Buenos Aires in what will be a key exposure tour ahead of the World Cup and the Asian Games later this year.

Head coach Sjoerd Marijne said the tour would be crucial in testing combinations and building squad depth.

"This tour is a valuable opportunity for us to give more players international exposure and test them against a very strong opponent like Argentina," he stated in a release.

"It's important for us to build depth within the squad, and experiences like these help young players understand the demands of top-level hockey while also giving us a chance to test out various combinations." —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

BADMINTON ASIA CHAMPIONSHIPS 2026

Sindhu wins a thriller in first round, Lakshya knocked out

NINGBO, 8 APRIL

Two-time Olympic medallist P.V. Sindhu survived a scare in the first round of the Badminton Asia Championships 2026 in Ningbo, China, on Wednesday.

Playing a match after more than two months, Sindhu came from behind to defeat Malaysian World No. 38 Wong Ling Ching 15-21, 21-11, 21-19 in an hour and seven minutes. The Indian will face the second-seeded Chinese and two-time champion Wang Zhi Yi for a place in the quarterfinals.

However, Lakshya Sen suffered a 12-21, 19-21 defeat against Hong Kong's Lee Cheuk Yiu.

P.V. Sindhu –*PTI*

Later in the day, H.S. Prannoy, Kidambi Srikanth, Unnati Hooda, and Tanvi Sharma will also be in action in singles.

Women's Singles: P. V. Sindhu bt Wong Ling Ching (MAS) 15-21, 21-11, 21-19; Busanan Ongbamrungphan (THA) bt Malvika Bansod 21-10, 21-19

Men's Singles: Ayush Shetty bt [5] Li Shi Feng (CHN) 21-13, 21-16; Lee Cheuk Yiu (HKG) bt Lakshya Sen 21-12, 21-19

Women's Doubles: [8] Li Yi Jing (CHN)/Luo Xu Min (CHN) bt Kavipriya Selvam/ Simran Singhi 21-9, 21-8

Ayush Shetty –*PTI*

Ayush stuns world No. 7

Lin in opener

India's Ayush Shetty stunned world No. 7 Lin Shi Feng of China in straight games to enter the second round of the men's singles competition at the Badminton Asia Championships here on Wednesday.

World No 25 Ayush, who had won the US Open Super 300 title last year, registered a 21-13, 21-16 victory in 51 minutes.

Lin raced to a 4-1 lead early on, but Ayush clawed back to level at 7-7 before gradually taking control to pocket the opening game.

After the change of sides, the Chinese again moved ahead 4-1 and extended it to 12-9, but Ayush turned the tide with a six-point burst to surge to 18-13.

Lin closed the gap to 16-18, but the Indian held his nerve to shut the door on his fancied opponent. —*PTI*